

TWO OLD WOMEN: CULTURALLY RELEVANT
LITERATURE DISCUSSIONS IN THE 4TH GRADE

By

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

In

Applied Linguistics

University of Alaska Fairbanks

May 2019

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Abstract

Two Old Women: Literature Discussions in the 4th Grade is a teacher action research study exploring the connections between the reading of culturally relevant texts, and the relationship between the roles of the teacher and students. As a teacher at the Alaska Native Cultural Charter School in the Anchorage School District, I strive to include culturally rich Indigenous literature in the classroom so students can experience traditional oral narratives in a written format. Our school strives to build student excellence through traditional cultural learning with a focus on Alaska Native Values, and this thematic story by Velma Wallis encompasses those traditions. In this teacher action research study, I collected data through audio recordings, video recordings, student artifacts, and a teacher journal in a span of eight weeks. These data were analyzed using the constructivist grounded theory. I found that utilizing a culturally relevant text in a western format allows students the opportunity to learn about culture, traditions, and how these continue to shape ideas and thinking today. Through this research, I found that using culturally relevant literature allowed students to access their funds of knowledge, but this process takes time and practice between teacher and students. The students stated that they loved this book and ultimately, they read some common truths about themselves and their community.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

My name is Georgianna Starr. I was born in the village of Scammon Bay, Alaska, in my grandmother's house. I grew up among many family members until my mother remarried and moved us to California in 1970. This move was shocking to me, but I will always remember my brown group of friends in Redding, California, since there were so few of us at that time. As a child growing up, I knew who I was based on my mother's Yup'ik side of the family. When I moved down states, I was in a school that was mainly Caucasian. My friends were Maria, a Mexican, Irene who is Chinese, Charlotte, African American, Duane, down states Native, and myself. I also had Caucasian friends in the neighborhood, but at school, it seems that we stuck together. I do not remember any lessons on culture, identity, or language (other than standardized English) in California. When I was 10 years old, we moved back to Glenallen, Alaska, where my dad worked for Alascom. We were in an Ahtna Athabascan area, yet there seemed to be a racial divide in the community, which was reflected in the dynamics in the school. There was a language teacher who tried to teach us Ahtna in small groups, but that was only to the Native students. My friend, who is a vice principal in one of the local villages, told me that during Senior year, she spoke to the school staff about Native Youth Olympics, and this was soundly rejected. It was in this atmosphere that we felt that our Indigenous heritage was not viewed as being important in the educational realm.

Even at a young age, I realized that there were cultural and educational differences that I had to learn to maneuver through. I knew that I was Yup'ik and Athabascan. I knew that my mother was not a fluent English speaker, yet she did not speak Yup'ik to me in California, having been told that I would do better in school if I spoke English only. I knew that I struggled in reading, and I never heard anyone saying the word bilingual. I now know my struggle was

due to my not being a proficient English speaker until after the age of five. I knew that I did not enjoy reading until the 5th grade, where reading opened up a whole new world for me. My story is not unique though. There are generations of adults who grew up in bilingual homes who lost their Indigenous language due to stigma, politics, religion, and forced assimilation. This is what shaped me as an adult, and this is what I always remember as a 4th grade teacher at Alaska Native Cultural Charter School (ANCCS). Reading was my escape, my coping mechanism, and ultimately what opened my eyes to many worlds around me. This is what I want my students to feel when they read a book, but I also want them to learn that reading is multi-faceted.

I began teaching in 1999 with the Lower Kuskokwim School District at Akiuk Memorial in Kasigluk, Alaska. The majority of my students were Yup'ik first language speakers. They spoke mainly Yugtun (Yup'ik language) at home and learned academic English at school. I taught 4th grade, English language development K-3, and math from 4-7th grade. This was not easy as a new teacher, but I jumped in with enthusiasm with my 4th grade class. Even back then, I incorporated literature clubs in the classroom. Since the students learned academic English in school, this was two-fold. I wanted the students to read high interest books for book discussions to build English proficiency, practice oral language development, and learn to discuss literature through engagement and hands on activities. I remember focusing on *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Rowling, 1999) since that was a hot book back then.

This format of reading, discussing books in small groups, and then creating projects followed me to Bethel when I began teaching English Language Arts and math at Ayaprun Elitnaurvik Yup'ik Immersion from 2001 to 2010. My then 5th and 6th grade read chapter books that they chose in their own small groups. Students read books from *Freckle Juice* (Blume, 1971), *Julie of the Wolves* (George, 1979), to *Dealing with Dragons* (Wrede, 1990). Each group

was expected to read, discuss their book in small groups, then produce a project. The stronger readers read more and produced more projects. Struggling readers were still expected to read and produce projects but perhaps at a slower pace. I created a large library of multiple copy books from Scholastic book orders. When Ayaprun Elitnaurvik at Kilbuck burned down to the ground, I felt pain at the loss of the school, the libraries and curriculum built with love and dedication from the staff, and yes, loss at my library of books that I left for the school in 2010.

When I moved to Anchorage, I did not pursue literature clubs due to time constraints. My site administrator expected me to follow the reading curriculum with fidelity based on her comments during staff meetings. This led me to believe that the time needed to pursue literature clubs would take away from the prescribed reading curriculum. Since I have been at ANCCS for six years currently, I decided to revisit literacy practices that worked in the past that resulted in student engagement, discussion, and responsibility. This background was the rationale why I pursued literature clubs for my teacher action research. I wanted to continue exploring literature with my 4th graders, but I wanted a specific cultural focus since this was my fifth year teaching at ANCCS in Anchorage, Alaska, and culture is an important part of the school's curriculum.

When I moved to Anchorage and was hired at the Alaska Native Cultural School, I did not implement literature clubs like I had in the past. We had time at the end of the day where we read *Toughboy and Sister* (Hill, 1999) as a whole group. This was not done as a literature club but rather as a shared read. We sat in a circle on the floor and I asked for kids to read aloud. I took over when there were lulls in the reading. At the end of the book, students chose to create a play on an important scene of the book. Students still read books in small groups but had limited conversations due to time constraints. Within our reading block, there was the expectation that

we “stick” to the reading program with fidelity. Based on this, I discontinued practices that I had done before with my students in Bethel.

Alaska Native Cultural Charter School (ANCCS) in Anchorage is a preschool through eighth grade school that focuses on Alaska Native Cultures, Yugtun language, Alaskan literature, policies and politics of Alaska’s First People. Each grade explores a different culture while following quarterly themes: Living in Place, Language and Communication, Culture and Expression, and Tribe and Community. ANCCS is the only Title 1 Charter School in Anchorage that was created to offer a holistic approach that combines Alaska Native language, culture, history, and traditional practices into an inquiry and standards based program.

When I taught in Bethel, my students were in an Yup’ik Immersion school. They were surrounded by language, culture, and identity. At ANCCS, I have had to produce the same atmosphere sans language in my classroom and I had a strong desire for my students to be immersed in Athabascan literature. For my teacher action research (TAR) project, I decided on the traditional story turned novel *Two Old Women* (Wallis, 1993) guided by these research questions:

- What meanings do students make during collaborative discussions of culturally relevant literature?
- What is the role of the teacher during these collaborative discussions?

Since I work at Native Charter, I realized that this focus would be of interest to the staff at school. Part of this cultural enhancement is the reading and exploration of Athabascan and Indigenous literature. This content is supported both by relevant research, cultural standards, as well as Alaska State Standards. This book is used in 7th grade within Anchorage School District (ASD). Staff members expressed interest in my TAR process and how this book was used as a

thematic unit. In passing, the 7/8th grade teacher yelled down the hallway “give me your stuff for *Two Old Women!*” The literacy coach also reminded me that we need to meet after the holidays about incorporating projects into literature. I am also mentoring my partner teacher, a second-year teacher with ASD. Even though she worked at the schools before as an interventionist and her daughter went through the program, this was her first time focusing on the Athabascan culture. We have newer staff who are also motivated to include traditional literature into their classrooms. I wanted my students to read this amazing story about these two elders, these two old women, who learned that strength resides in all of us. The story reflects how we learn from communal knowledge, communal memory, and how this belief shapes our lives.

In Chapter 2, I provide a background and rationale for this study, by describing such themes as Indigenous epistemology and meaning making, funds of knowledge, the four resources model of reading, and collaborative dialogue. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology, and Chapter 4 presents an analysis of the data. Chapter 5 concludes this study with reflections on what I have learned and why this TAR process was meaningful for me and my students. They felt empowered, important, and worked diligently to prepare for the discussions. I also enjoyed the process because as an Indigenous teacher and as a Master’s student, I “seek to move the role of Indigenous knowledge and learning from the margins to the center of educational research, and thus take on the some of the most intractable and salient issues of our times” (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005, p. 10).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

As teaching professionals, in order to teach our students, we need to acknowledge that Indigenous ways of knowing are not lost to antiquity but are continuing to evolve and change in this modern world. Children need to know that they are the generation that continues on traditional knowledge with community values such as: collective-decision making, kinship, elder knowledge, beliefs on time and reality, as well as community structures. It is these types of values, along with Indigenous epistemology and funds of knowledge, that enable students to work together in my literature clubs. In this review of the literature, I illustrate how Indigenous values and epistemologies are represented in this teacher action research (TAR) focus. Since this TAR was done in a cultural charter school using traditional literature, collaborative literature practices were intertwined with a traditional narrative. This review also includes a discussion of funds of knowledge and the Four Resources Model, which informed the literature club process. Finally, this chapter closes with descriptions of the literature club process and collaborative dialogue. As an Indigenous teacher and as a Master's student, my goals are to show how all of these theories and practices are intertwined with the practices of our Indigenous charter school and community.

Indigenous Epistemology and Meaning Making in Schools

As a 4th grade teacher at ANCCS, I focus on a variety of methods to get my students involved in reading, whether it is for personal enjoyment or for academic growth. Regardless of what students are reading, teachers need to realize that students are always engaging in meaning making strategies to ensure that comprehension is happening. Since I work with mainly Alaska Native students, I also take a sociocultural approach in both my personal and academic lessons and design curricula with an emphasis on Indigenous literature, ways of knowing, and styles of

communication. This approach takes into consideration how and why Alaska Native students use their cultural lens and ways of learning into reading, writing, and math. In doing so, I am going to delve into Indigenous worldviews and how these worldviews carry over into academia.

“Epistemology is the study of the nature of thinking or knowing. It involves the theory of how we come to have knowledge, or how we know that we know something. It includes entire systems of thinking or style of cognitive functioning that are built on specific ontologies” (Wilson, 2008, p. 33). Indigenous epistemology can be made known through a variety of ways. Besides traditional values being on a poster in school, as well as images of elders and their wise sayings, there are known aspects of traditional knowledge systems that continue today based on the culture of the students’ families and communities. Table 2.1 shows how these knowledge systems differ from Western systems.

Table 2.1 Indigenous Worldview and Western Worldview (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005, pp. 8-23, adapted from Suzuki & Knudtson, 1992 pp. 13-15)

Indigenous Worldview	Western Worldview
Spirituality is imbedded in all elements of the cosmos.	Spirituality is centered in a single Supreme being.
Humans have responsibility for maintaining harmonious relationships with the natural world.	Humans exercise dominion over nature to use it for personal and economic gain.
Need for reciprocity between human and natural worlds - resources are viewed as gifts.	Natural resources are available for unilateral human exploitation.
Nature is honored routinely through daily spiritual practice.	Spiritual practices are intermittent and set apart from daily life.
Wisdom and ethics are derived from direct experience with the natural world.	Human reason transcends the natural world and can produce insights independently.
Universe is made up of dynamic, ever-changing natural forces.	Universe is made up of an array of static physical objects.

Universe is viewed as a holistic, integrative system with a unifying life force.	Universe is compartmentalized in dualistic forms and reduced to progressively smaller conceptual parts.
Time is circular with natural cycles that sustain all life.	Time is a linear chronology of "human progress."
Nature will always possess unfathomable mysteries.	Nature is completely decipherable to the rational human mind.
Human thought, feelings and words are inextricably bound to all other aspects of the universe.	Human thought, feeling and words are formed apart from the surrounding world.
Human role is to participate in the orderly designs of nature.	Human role is to dissect, analyze and manipulate nature for own ends.
Respect for elders is based on their compassion and reconciliation of outer- and inner-directed knowledge.	Respect for others is based on material achievement and chronological old age.
Sense of empathy and kinship with other forms of life.	Sense of separateness from and superiority over other forms of life.
View proper human relationship with nature as a continuous two-way, transactional dialogue.	View relationship of humans to nature as a one-way, hierarchical imperative.

The term “holistic” is used frequently when describing Indigenous belief systems, and refers to the worldview, language, culture, and identity that shape people and community. If we look at the above list of characteristics that highlight the differences between Western and Alaskan Indigenous beliefs, Indigenous knowledge systems view these features as all linked together, interconnected, and as being independent yet referenced as being whole. For thousands of years, these interconnected systems were sustained and reinforced through traditional values, beliefs, and practices that connected self to family, family to community, and community to the natural and spiritual world, and “Indigenous people have traditionally acquired their knowledge through direct experience in the natural world.” (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005, p. 11). As the Western world encroached upon the Indigenous peoples, these ways of knowing

and funds of knowledge were tested by outside forces through Western religion, education, and euro-centric beliefs that belittled and ignored long standing community traditions and world views. These funds of knowledge or Indigenous worldviews are just as important today for my fourth grade students as they bridge a foundation of values from the distant past that are interwoven with values from today.

For a Native student imbued with an Indigenous, experientially grounded, holistic worldview, typical approaches to schooling can present an impediment to learning to the extent that they focus on compartmentalized knowledge with little regard for how academic subjects relate to one another or to the surrounding universe. (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005, p.11)

A student's worldview is the lens through which they review their surroundings and is the basis for their schema in comprehension. According to Moll, "formulation of how social practices and use of cultural artifacts mediates thinking, highlights how classrooms (or households) are always socially or culturally organized settings, artificial creations, whose specific practices mediate the intellectual work children accomplish" (2017, p. 21).

This worldview is not just about the natural or physical world. This includes the metaphysical world as well. "Our children's experiences have been different from those of the typical white middle-class child for whom most school curricula have been designed" (Seale & Slapin, 2005, p. 8). For many Indigenous children, the nature of existence, of being, goes beyond the physical into the spiritual realms or dimensions. For example, in Quarter 2 this year, my fourth graders learned about Dena'ina Athabascan spiritual beliefs which include the mythical space when animals could talk; the self which includes body, breath, and shadow spirit; and that these dimensions include the animal and ancestor spirits all the way to the supreme

being. These interconnected dimensions are affected by everyone's thoughts and actions; in other words, all individual actions could affect space and time and everything happens for a reason. This worldview becomes a moral code. It is also imperative to realize that all members of the Tribe come with strengths that become realized with time and experience. All members of the Tribe then have roles and responsibilities that are unique to their specific skills or expertise. Elders then become culture bearers and with time, comes wisdom and a wealth of knowledge about the natural world. "Traditionally, elders with distinguished memories, both men and women, were registered as custodians of cultural and practical knowledge" (Woodbury, 1984, p. 15). In the story *Two Old Women* (Wallis, 1993), the two women survived due to their distinguished memories and prior knowledge of growing up in a harsh northern environment.

The emphasis on practical application of skills, knowledge, and inherited wisdom are other important features in Indigenous knowledge systems. In *Two Old Women* (Wallis, 1993), the women's in-depth knowledge of the land, survival, and knowledge in hunting and gathering gave them the practical application of the knowledge to defeat death and save themselves and the People from starvation. Since the women were also elders, they had the ultimate wisdom to thrive as they survived. They used their generational knowledge and wisdom from their long years of living off the land. This also allowed them to make items based on their knowledge such as the snowshoes, which they might not have made themselves before but had years of observation into the process. This experimentation into an item of such practical usage also assisted them to survive walking through the deep snow.

Fourth graders at Alaska Native Cultural School are exposed to culturally relevant literature based on traditional narratives or fictional chapter books. However, they do not read longer novels that are culturally based. *Two Old Women* (Wallis, 1993) is a complex story,

which is usually assigned to middle school readers rather than fourth graders, but our Indigenous students need multicultural literature that is place based, complex, and based on traditional narrative. Researchers like Leonard (2008) argue that works like this are important representations of cultural images and values: “with the current emphasis on the pedagogy of place based educational models, it is vital for students to understand the challenges of presenting complex cultural materials in appropriate and respectful ways” (Leonard, 2008, p. 1). The events of *Two Old Women* (Wallis, 1993) involve difficult decisions that affect all members of the tribe. The events in this story are told in stark language using descriptive, higher level vocabulary words for elementary students. For example, in *Two Old Women* (Wallis, 1993), the Chief learned a hard lesson on respecting the inherited wisdom of the elders and how this respect for their knowledge must be unequivocal. This respect also changed their practices of never leaving the elders behind again, and this traditional oral narrative became a story of record, locally told by storytellers, until it became a bestselling book. Velma Wallis connected this story to the modern readers and told of a people with strong connections to family, to community, to life, to ways of knowing, and of being. Again, this application of past to present is also part of the holistic belief system which integrates the values and systems that are part of the Indigenous worldview.

The literature in the classroom also shows students that their traditional stories are valued because “literature functions as a major socializing agent. It tells students who and what their society and culture values, what kinds of behaviors are acceptable and appropriate, and what it means to be a decent human being” (Tschida et al., 2014 p. 28). In that case then, as a teacher at ANCCS, I realized that there are Indigenous worldviews that need to be honored, learned, addressed, and worldviews that are just as important as Westernized belief systems. This TAR

project was a school based unit but also an Athabascan unit with “...practices in Indigenous societies, which tend toward collective decision making, extended kinship structures, ascribed authority vested in elders, flexible notions of time, and traditions of informality in everyday affairs” (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005, p.13). I wanted Indigenous ways of knowing and collaboration to be integrated into this unit, because “when readers are able to find themselves in a text, they are therefore validated; their experiences are not so unique or strange as to never be spoken by or experienced by others” (Tschida, et al., 2014, p. 29). This was a text about Native women in a remote rural area of Alaska, which my students have experience with.

Students are familiar with familial systems, which include family trees, namesakes, and interpersonal stories that add to each student’s own unique perspective as a real human that pertain to their specific area or village. We also cannot forget those words sayings found on posters of traditional values and how these are not just words on paper but real and necessary values for living in close knit communities. Indigenous epistemology reflects this interconnection between community, culture, and identity in how knowledge is known and transferred. This becomes especially important when working with Indigenous communities and families who are still coping with the after effects of their ancestors’ trauma: forced assimilation, language loss, institutionalized racism, and continued generational and intergenerational trauma. If we look at mainstream schools, these worldviews that intertwine the physical with the spiritual world, knowledge passed down from the ancestors, and the values and structures that shape such views, are not expressed in the schools, curriculum, and assessments that students face daily.

We want our students to be successful in school, be self-aware and self-reliant along with having pride in their cultural background. We want our students to promote their cultural, academic, and social /emotional growth for the continued health and well-being of our

communities. We, as Indigenous people, often hear that in order to have healthy communities, we need healthy children. We also hear that in order for a language to survive, the children need to speak. These put at a crossroads, curriculum wise, the needs of specific programming such as Title I within our schools. Within this crossroads, “decolonizing the curriculum” has become a catch phrase being widely used at the university level as well as within Native action groups. But what does that mean?

Indigenization at the UR [University of Regina] is understood as the transformation of the existing academy by including Indigenous knowledges, voices, critiques, scholars, students and materials as well as the establishment of physical and epistemic spaces that facilitate the ethical stewardship of a plurality of Indigenous knowledges and practices so thoroughly as to constitute an essential element of the university. It is not limited to Indigenous people, but encompasses all students and faculty, for the benefit of our academic integrity and our social viability. (University of Regina, 2019)

The Alaska Native Cultural Charter School was founded in 2007 by members of the Anchorage community. Our Mission, similar to what the Indigenous Advisory Circle at the University of Regina expressed, is to build student excellence through traditional cultural learning.

Funds of knowledge and culturally-based curricula.

Funds of knowledge is the link between the community and the school. The term funds of knowledge refers to “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (Moll et al., 2001, p. 133). This also refers to how the individuals and community deal with change, whether it is socioeconomic and/or cultural and how this affects community roles and relationships. Communication styles and how knowledge is passed on can also be included in funds of

knowledge. Rivers (2001) states, “among multicultural Yaqui Indians in Arizona (they) found evidence of broad use of metacognitive and communicative strategies in oral discourse and narrative” (p. 281). This follows in the Alaska Native Traditions of oral narratives being passed down from generation to generation. The use of oral discourse and narrative requires a close look at language proficiency, language needs, community motivation and beliefs as well as the assumptions associated with this necessity. As this knowledge is related to the culture of the community the students come from, educational institutions based on Eurocentric models often did not value or utilize this knowledge, communication styles, or traditional narratives in mainstream schools.

Culture based curricula are one way to connect funds of knowledge to the classroom. For instance, in the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe schools, Hermes (2007) observed “how powerful culture-based curriculum could be to motivate and create self-esteem for students” (p. 56). Educators who participate in these connections will know the child as a whole person and not merely a student, taking into account or having knowledge about the multiple spheres of activity within which the child is enmeshed (Moll et al., 2001, p.134). In fostering this relationship between child and community, how do schools bridge this, to highlight the connection to community? For example, at ANCCS, we ask community members, often parents or family members of the students, to come in to speak to the students during morning message. This is a gathering of students before school begins in the gym. Students sit in rows and lines according to their grade. Sixth through eighth graders MC the message which focuses on animal helpers, Indigenous values, input from students, as well as guest speakers. On Mondays, the students have guest speakers who are invited to speak to the students about a variety of topics: value of education, family, community, jobs and skills, or themes related to the animal helpers. This is

part of our morning message that students receive daily, a positive way to remind students of Native values, and to link the students to valued community members.

This is also a reason that schools like Alaska Native Cultural Charter were formed “to build excellence through traditional cultural learning with a focus on Alaska Native Values” (Alaska Native Cultural Charter School, 2019). It has always been my belief that the more grounded students are with strong cultural foundation, their experiences can only be enhanced in an environment that embraces traditional and education. This also applies to my Teacher Action Research. Wilson (2008) addresses the idea of cultural identity and academia: “More is being done to bring the Indigenous communities into the research process... these new Indigenous scholars have introduced Indigenous beliefs, values, and customs into the research process (p. 15). This has been referred to as “walking in two worlds.” Part of the school’s ongoing review of materials has been a discussion of decolonizing the curriculum, usage of Math in a Cultural Context, Indigenous usage of the natural environment in science, and language revitalization. As a Native charter school, we continually strive to provide and promote culture across the curriculum, since “the concept of a book acting as a mirror implies that readers see something of themselves in the text. Such a book reflects back to readers’ portions of their identities, cultures, or experiences” (Tshida, Ryan, & Swenson-Ticknor, 2014, p. 29).

Even my own background supports having cultural curriculum utilizing funds of knowledge that mirrors what my Indigenous students see in school. This background is always in my mind when I work with my native students, but cultural disparity is more common than not. Native educators like myself believe that education is an equalizer in closing the educational gap in our students while maintaining language, culture, and identity.

Native people may need to understand Western society, but not at the expense of what they already know and the way they have come to know it. Non-Native people, too, need to recognize the coexistence of multiple worldviews and knowledge systems, and find ways to understand and relate to the world in its multiple dimensions and varied perspectives. (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005, p. 8)

“Walking in two worlds” is a term that is commonly used in Alaska that refers to students linking their Indigenous culture to the Western culture. For myself, this has meant that I needed to work twice as hard to gain equity in a society that does not view Indigenous cultures as being relevant. The two systems (Indigenous and Western) are not mutually exclusive but need to work together synergistically to meet the needs of all the students. Students need to know where they come from and how this strengthens their connections to their community through education, both Indigenous and western.

Storytelling.

Storytelling is one way to strengthen these connections because “storytelling links the students’ past to their present” (Webster & Yanez, 2007, p.116). Since students may not hear traditional stories being told at home, they need to hear and read traditional stories in school since “...a people’s stories carry its history, its culture, its ceremonies and spiritual practices--its identity” (Seale & Slapin, 2005, p.5). Velma Wallis (1993) explains why she retold *Two Old Women*: “I was impressed with it (the story) because it not only taught me a lesson that I could use in life, but also because it was a story about my people and my past...” (p.xii).

“Stories provide a number of important functions. They are a way to preserve a people’s historical and cultural memory and a way to connect the past to the present.” (Webster & Yanez, 2007, p. 116). Since I live and teach in Anchorage, it is important as a Yup’ik/Koyukon teacher

to honor and acknowledge the land that we are on is Dena'ina Athabascan. This is one of the reasons why I begin my Athabascan studies with the Dena'ina. This honoring through literacy shows “that there is relatedness to elements of animals, plants, skies, climate, waterways, and people” (Healy, 2008, p. 61). Within this relatedness, we show that literacy is also written, oral, visual, audio, tactile, gestural, and spatial. “One of the most significant challenges to the old literacy teaching is the increasing multimodality of meaning” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p.12). This holistic view of literacy is necessary for our Indigenous children to see that what is “old” is still necessary today, and to help guide their future.

Even though oral narratives are considered traditional literacy, we have to use traditional stories in written text. This principle also acknowledges that Indigenous people have a wealth of knowledge in these stories, and that this knowledge is important in the continuation of transmission from generation to generation. As John (2010) states:

... There are connections in dance, music, and stories that are part of our yuuyaraq (epistemic worldview)...there is a relationship in storytelling genres in dance and stories that represent a people's historical and contemporary accounts, describing their social, cultural, and subsistence lifestyle. (John, 2010, p. iv)

These stories are valued in what they bring to the audience, whether it is an individual need or as reminders of community norms. It is also important to note that these stories are not static, but adaptable and dynamic. While the storyteller tells of skills, abilities, problem solving, or trickery, the message changes over time as the culture changes and adapts. The message of the story is also dependent on the listener's needs. The individual receives the message that they need to hear. This deep knowledge system is reflected in schools' curricula and what they hold

to be important. For example, Katie George, a Yup'ik teacher from Akiachiak, wrote from their school's mission statement:

All students master the basic skills, develop self-confidence, become self-reliant, possess knowledge of Yup'ik traditional ways... Most teachers know that you need to be aware of your students' cultural heritage, be cognizant of the community's norms, and utilize place based education in your classroom. (George, 2016, p.15)

This awareness is important in place based multi-literacies, as the majority of our students at ANCCS are of Alaska Native descent, and the school continually strives to further indigenize the curriculum within the Anchorage School District. Being aware of students' funds of knowledge and Indigenous and western worldviews can inform a teacher's choice in the stories they include in the classroom.

The choice of two old women.

Two Old Women (Wallis, 1993) is based on a traditional Gwich'in Athabascan story and is beautifully retold by Velma Wallis, a Gwich'in author. This story focuses the two elderly women who are abandoned by their tribe during times of famine. The women must survive or die trying. This story was passed on for many generations, and it is necessary to remind students why storytelling matters in literacy, in authenticity, and also in promoting traditional norms and values. These stories give a message to students, yet are open to interpretation, and based on what the needs of the children are at that time. Often, as we are reading stories in class, a student asks if the stories are true. These questions are often asked of storytellers. For example, Annie Blue, an elder from Togiak, was known as a Yup'ik culture bearer of stories and language. "When we asked Annie (Blue) if some stories are true and others fictional, she replied emphatically that all are true. Our ancestors would not have told them if they were not true" (Orr

& Orr, 2007, p. xvii). This holistic belief ties together learning from the past, living in the present and utilizing that knowledge to prepare for tomorrow. This ideal is reflected in the story *Two Old Women* (Wallis, 1993). The story itself exemplifies the melding of past, present, and future.

Two Old Women (Wallis, 1993) is a written version of an oral narrative, but there are still features that apply to the text according to Agosto (2016): 1) *Two Old Women* is a traditional story thought of as being expository, 2) students are able to visualize events through illustrations, 3) the teacher can read the story aloud, 4) students' emotions surge during events, and 5) students engage in place based knowledge. This knowledge is reflected in schools' curricula and the honoring of not only the 11 Alaska Native groups, but also Indigenous groups around the world. For example, the Nuu-chah-nulth, the people of the Pacific Coast of Vancouver Island, describe the importance of "haa-huu-pah," a term that means "what we do when we get up every day to make the world good":

Haa-huu-pah are not fairy tales or entertaining stories for children --they are lived values that form the basis for Indigenous governance and regeneration. The experiential knowledge and living histories of haa-huu-pah comprise part of the core teachings that Indigenous families transmit to further generations. (Corntassel, p. 138)

"Stories are gifts given by an elder to a younger person" (Wallis, 1993, p. xvi). Stories also show how people adapt to change and how these changes are reflected in the community. Indigenous people around the world share similar beliefs and ways of knowing. This is a type of network that is not often thought about as being so as far as authenticity is concerned. I had a former principal who was fond of saying "it's a small native community out there", meaning that it is common to meet Native people and finds bonds that unite, build common understandings

and actively seeking those commonalities as you meet and ask “where are you from?” This insider perspective is necessary for authenticity or in being a “real” person.

Along the same lines, the students can utilize their funds of knowledge about life in rural Alaska with the storyline of *Two Old Women* (Wallis, 1993). While this book is set in the distant past, there are themes that the students have familiarity with: survival, community, knowledge and respect for elders, hunting and gathering, hard work, kinship, and familial ties. In viewing the child as a whole, we need to utilize their funds of knowledge in planning. We have to be aware of their history, their family, their language exposure, where they live, what schools they have been to, and especially their areas of strength. These areas of strength need to be valued at school and be brought to the forefront when dealing with systems that do not necessarily seek Indigenous ways of knowing. Funds of knowledge connects homes and classrooms. The majority of my students are AK Native descent and can utilize their Funds of Knowledge about life in Rural AK within the story. Students have the opportunity to engage in collaborative discussions which allows students to communicate and problem solve together, while building their linguistic knowledge. This ties into Luke and Freebody (1990) as a framework that views literacy as social and cultural. The four resources model of reading can be used to integrate the culture of the school as well as the culture of the community.

Four Resources Model of Reading

Literacy in the traditional Indigenous sense includes oral narratives, Indigenous music as well as dancing that links the spiritual to the physical world. When teachers include traditional narratives in the classroom, we need to be aware of how our Native children learn, and the four resources model can inform literacy practices in a culturally relevant classroom. “The Four Resources Model is a model of literacy instruction that emphasizes critical literacy, as well as

basic decoding and comprehension” (Casher & Stotler, 2015, p.19). The four resources model was brought to light by Luke and Freebody (1990) as a framework that views literacy as social and cultural practice, addressing the sociological as well as social justice needs of students. “This issue thus becomes not whether a ‘basic skills’, a communicative, or a ‘critical’ approach to literacy instruction is most appropriate or necessary, but rather that each of these families of approaches displays and emphasizes particular forms of literacy” (Luke & Freebody, 1990, p. 7). This model enables students to “shape their own lives while also shaping and contributing to the communities and greater society in which they live” (Casher & Stotler, 2015, p. 20). This model is used during literacy events or in my case, during literature clubs that incorporate literary skills needed in active reading as well as comprehension. “A sociological model highlights that ‘teaching’ and learning to read is about teaching and learning standpoints, cultural expectations, norms of social actions, and consequences” (Heffernan, 2004, p. 3). We can think about the Four Resources as a model with an emphasis on critical literacy, decoding, and comprehension. Critical literacy then becomes a necessity in the theoretical approach to teaching about literacy to the whole population that embraces diversity in language, culture, and identity. This model of literacy will “fully enable students to use texts effectively, in their own individual and collective interests, across a range of discourses, texts to tasks” (Luke & Freebody, 1990, p. 8). As part of reflecting critically about teaching practices, Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator “thought that students should be reading the word and the world” (Casher & Stotler, 2015, p. 20). In other words, this model engages the students in shaping their identities to become socially as well as politically aware members of their communities or society in general. This is especially true of our students in our school where culture is a component in the curriculum. As a teacher, it is

also important and necessary to view how you choose instructional practices in the classroom. This inclusion of critical literacy embodies the concepts illustrated in the four resources model.

In the four resources model, Casher and Stotler (2015), expand on the ideologies embodied by Luke and Freebody (1990) as they discuss practical classroom applications through reader's/writer's workshops. This workshop model allows students to gain ownership of their learning through literacy instruction that is both individualized as well as taught whole group. Casher and Stotler (2015) also look at a critical framework of literacy that is text based, views sociological ideology as the norm, and incorporates the student as part of the critical literacy process in order to comprehend the text as a: code breaker, text participant, text user, and text analyst. These approaches to reading a text occur simultaneously and not in isolation.

The code breaker needs to view the text as an “investigator” and look at the structural features of the text. A student code breaker needs to “crack the codes and systems of writing, spoken, and visual texts” (Casher & Stotler, 2015, p. 21), by asking themselves the following questions: 1) How does the structure of this text work and how do I read it, 2) How do the parts relate to each other, 3) What are its codes and conventions, and 3) How do I decode this text with help from my peers? This is especially good practice for students who are reading difficult text. Not only are they making sense of sentence structures, but they are also decoding text features and literary elements such as characters, setting, plot, theme, and point of view. As they decode at their level, assistance from their classmates during dialogue can help them with comprehension during vocabulary exposure and specific lessons as needed.

As a text participant, the students determine meaning through connections to self, to other texts, and to the world. This means that students participate in the text in a variety of ways to construct meaning. Students not only incorporate their funds of knowledge, knowledge of text,

ability to problem solve or fix-it strategies to maneuver through the text, but also actively participate in the critical literacy dialogue to build fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies. This can assist in the literature-based conversations to compose meaningful questions, compose notes, and help students with verbal responses to initiate collaborative dialogue. This also helps with their assigned jobs: what predictions can you make, what is the text about, how do events connect to one another, are there inferences you can make, and what questions, comments, or concerns do you have? All of this text engagement is necessary to engage in meaning making during shared reading, independent reading and while being engaged in the dialogue.

Students also need to be aware of the language use in the text as the text user. This is especially useful as the Common Core standards (Anchorage School District, 2019) view literacy as reading, writing, listening, and speaking while asking themselves what personal opinions they have about the text, how they are using this text in collaborative dialogue, how they feel about the author's storytelling, and whether they would recommend this story to others. As a culture school that promotes culture and identity, choosing well-crafted culturally relevant literature is key when asking students to read and respond to the text through note taking and collaborative dialogue.

A text analyst incorporates strategies to figure out the author's purpose or message by asking themselves: what is the story trying to tell me, why was the story set in that format, what was the purpose of the order of events, how is the use of culture and cultural connections helpful, and how does the solution fit the events of the story? As text analysts, the students can read, analyze, and co-construct answers while discussing key events. All of these roles or resources are geared to students using their comprehension strategies of summarizing, predicting,

evaluating the story, evaluating author's purpose, clarifying and monitoring, as well as making this event as purposeful as possible. This model allows students to use their funds of knowledge, text based strategies, comprehension strategies as well as language strategies in a format that views reading as a social, personal, knowledge building, and metacognitive process. This model also allows students the connections to self and classmates, literacy, and the world, to help them analyze not only literacy but society in general. As part of active and critical reading, students also need to have knowledge that this is a complex process and that this framework allows students to monitor their thinking as a means to question what they are reading, the purpose of the text, and how this fits into the larger world. We also need to allow for students to have a variety of strategies for when they lack comprehension. What do you do when you hit a roadblock? How do collaborative conversations help in the meaning making process? Teachers also need to model re-reading, chunking information, paraphrasing, note taking, utilization of graphic organizers, and collaboration as a means to foster self-sufficiency in comprehension. All of these can be addressed in the process of collaborative dialogue as part of the meaning making process. It is important to note that the applications of the four resources model are interconnected and not used in isolation. However, the teacher can decidedly use concepts in lessons as needed.

It is also interesting to note that Serafini (2012) further expanded the four resources model to reading visual and multi-modal texts, noting that the four resources model viewed literacy as only being written text based. He challenged the traditional model of literacy as being elitist, class-based, and did not view other literacies as being equal. Cultures that value songs, dance, oral narratives, or non-text based, are viewed as being less literate. We want to educate our students to the best of our abilities, and if we look at the system as a whole, from parents to

the classroom as well as community norms and needs, the idea that a shift to multimodality in literacy is necessary to represent and express meaning. He also shifted the model to reader as navigator, interpreter, designer, and interrogator. Serafini (2012) uses the term navigator to include decoding, concepts of prints, directionality, and sequencing. The interpreters are readers that analyze text, who are engaged in the reading and interpret the text through constructing meaning through comprehension. The reader as designer refers to the reader as a text participant who constructs meaning through the reading transaction. The reader as interrogator addresses not only cognitive processes of reading but also the aspect of how culture affects meaning. All of these are interrelated and necessary in the process of reading and comprehension. The four resources model, along with my previous literature club experiences, influenced the specific jobs that I had students do during literature discussions. I designed role sheets to not only give students material for discussions, but also to increase their ability to respond to text through writing. Additionally, the jobs students did to prepare for the literature discussions were chosen to promote reading strategies of questioning, connecting, visualizing, inferring, and determining importance.

Literature Clubs

Literature clubs, similar to literature circles and literature clubs, refers to an instructional approach that invites small groups of students to read, respond to, and analyze literature as they prepare to participate in open-ended discussions. Harvey Daniels in his groundbreaking book *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Student-Centered Classroom* (1994) gives practical explanations for teachers who want to organize student led group readings in their classes.

There has been documented research on why literature circles or literature clubs work (Marchiando, 2013; Mills & Jennings, 2011; Wies Long & Gove, 2003). This model of literacy

is often attributed to Daniels (2002), who through the years has found that literature circles provide a structure that encourages student “engagement, choice, responsibility, and research” (Daniels, 2006, p. 11). “Though the teacher plays a large role in getting literature circles up and running in her classroom, her role shifts to that of a coach or facilitator once those initial lessons have been taught” (Marchiando, 2013, p. 14). There are a variety of methods to incorporate or highlight literature circles in critical literacy instruction, but there are fundamentals also in that students choose books and students gain information through collaborative discussions. “It is also here where the teacher and students meet to interpret and respond to text together (Wies Long & Gove, 2004, p. 351). Students learn to self-monitor and engage in a literacy based democracy and engage in authentic conversation with teacher input. Many researchers and teachers have found ways to apply the roles or resources that Luke and Freebody suggest in the four resources model, although they may use different terminology and different instructional practices.

This model has been adopted, adapted, modified, and personalized for many teachers around the world. Literature clubs work in classrooms because students fall in love in with books they read (Daniels, 2006). Teachers can assist in shaping reading instruction through literacy clubs that foster students’ interests and involvement in meaning making through the use of multimodalities and multiliteracies utilizing the student’s funds of knowledge. Daniels (2006) states that teachers in all corners of the world have adopted, modified, personalized the basic model. The consistent outcome is that kids are falling in love with books they have chosen and talked about with their friends (p.11). Students develop their literacy knowledge and skills with the help of the teacher.

Students must have plenty of opportunities to engage in actively in the meaningful literacy practices of a given community—even before they have mastered those practices...students must receive support and scaffolds as they practice as they gradually move toward full participation and independent control of those practices. (Kong & Pearson, 2003, p.88)

Literature clubs with rich cultural texts allow students to be included as part of the insider perspective, to see how they build connections from text to self. This authenticity is portrayed beautifully in *Two Old Women* (Wallis, 1993) with rich details and strong themes which intends for the students to be engaged in active meaning making. “One premise of literature circles is that students come to each meeting prepared to discuss with their groups ideas about what they have read (Marchiando, 2013, p. 15). The literature jobs, note taking, and collaborative dialogue are all possible ways that students can support each other as they negotiate for meaning through authentic tasks. These roles give students a “purpose with which to approach the reading... and reading with a purpose helps students comprehend and remember text more easily (Marchiando, 2013, p. 15).

Literature clubs are important also in place based multi-literacies since the majority of our students are of Alaska Native descent. “It is vital that they have the opportunity to draw on and express their knowledge about themselves and their Stories, not just from people but also from other elements such, as plants, plants, and skies” (Healy, 2008, p.70). This holistic belief ties together learning from the past, living in the present and utilizing that knowledge to prepare for tomorrow. While studying Indigenous literature, students are exposed to beliefs and concepts that are similar or vary widely. This exposure to varying texts and beliefs allows students the ability to start constructing their own ideas on culture and identity. “Thus meaning has both a

cultural face, based on the dispositions and experiences students bring to the reading process and the interpretive reading traditions operating in the classroom (Kong & Pearson, 2003, p. 90).

Collaborative Dialogue

During literature discussions in the classroom, one key component is communication or dialogue among the students, with a focus on comprehension. “Collaborative dialogue is dialogue that constructs linguistic knowledge...it is where language use and language learning can co-occur. It is language use mediating language learning. It is cognitive activity and it is social activity” (Swain, 2000, p. 97). Collaborative dialogue allows the students to communicate their thoughts and ideas in a way that is understandable and that allows the speaker to use their language as well as literacy skills. The practice of communication increases these skills through practice, exploration, language and literacy problem solving, and repetition especially when students are discussing pertinent information about the text. It is always important to remember that collaborative dialogue is not just answering questions or reading written responses but is communication and cognition, building knowledge, and problem solving with the students working together using language. Students need to verbally participate, create meaning from their discussion, and then be able to share their thoughts with their peers. These then become peer answers that are shared among the group. This dialogue is both social and knowledge building and allows for comprehensible output. Since students are discussing the same text, they have a shared focus on comprehension building through collaboration.

In the output hypothesis according to Swain (1995), comprehensible output is needed. The focus is on the students being an active participant in making meaning out of their dialogue and communication within their ability to utilize their communicative functions. According to Swain there are three main functions of output that the student must actively engage.

1. Noticing the gap: students need to realize that they cannot exactly communicate the information that is needed. By noticing the gap, the student then modifies their output in order to learn something new about the language.
2. Hypothesis testing: students test what they want to say using what they feel is correct form.
3. Metalinguistic function: students use language as a tool to reflect on the language produced by others or that they themselves produce.

If we view output as the language the student produces, then the speaker needs to be actively engaged in the process. Then output becomes the means to “push learners to process language more deeply - with more mental effort-- than does input” (Swain, 2000, p. 99). This language production and communication assists the speaker in learning the language needed to communicate. If this is geared toward communication in literature, then there also needs to be inclusion of literacy elements with the end goal of comprehension as well as collaborative dialogue. That is also how the students notice that they have a ‘gap’ in their communication skills and then figure out how to fill that gap and produce the necessary vocabulary to communicate necessary information through negotiation for meaning. The students not only communicate for meaning, they also increase their own knowledge of the events of *Two Old Women* (Wallis, 1993). Each student builds on the knowledge that is produced, creates new knowledge, and then answers questions or solves dilemmas through meaning making. This then becomes a crucial step in collaborative dialogue for the co-construction of answers in a shared literary event. “It serves as a consciousness raising function of triggering “noticing”” (Ellis & Shintani, 2014, p.10). This leads to hypothesis testing and the speaker practices the form and then adjusts if and when they realize it is correct or not. This moving from meaning to form is

part of the process of comprehensible output as well as producing meaningful language. This metalinguistic function then allows the learner to further negotiate for meaning and then learn the correct form through trial and error. Students correct themselves, listen to each other and make corrections as needed, or listen for teacher recasts or other forms of feedback.

Meaning, rather than grammatical accuracy, is part of the learning process and objective. “It is what allows performance to outstrip competence. It is where language use and language learning can co-occur. It is language use mediating language learning. It is cognitive activity and it is social activity” (Swain, 2000, p.97). This is also developmental and procedural as the students gain proficiency and accuracy in their communicative ability. Students also need to know that if they notice gaps while trying to communicate information, they can use their own resources or funds of knowledge to access that information that is needed to convey the message. This process pushes the learners to process language at a deeper level since their process is based on communication. Noticing and awareness then become key for students when they realize that they lack the necessary information to convey their message. This realization then leads them to the path where they need to find a means to communicate and verbalize their intended message during co-construction of answers. In the literature club format, I want my students to have meaningful conversations about the chapter that they read in *Two Old Women* (Wallis, 1993), in order to allow for students to stretch their language resources to participate in collaborative dialogue and to co-construct meaning while doing so. Collaborative dialogue then becomes a necessary tool in the students’ co-construction of answers. This co-construction is geared towards ensuring that their thought processes are expressed through dialogue. Dialogue then is the “enactment of mental processes and occasions for L2 learning” (Swain & Lapkin, 1998, p. 321).

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the conceptual framework for my TAR. My focus was to help students construct their own ideas about culture and identity through discussions about culturally responsive literature. That is the main reason that my 4th graders read *Two Old Women* (Wallis, 1993). Two main research questions guided this TAR:

- What meanings do students make during collaborative discussions of culturally relevant literature?
- What is the role of the teacher during these collaborative discussions?

Since cooperative learning and dialogue work synergistically, a natural conclusion is that teachers need to look carefully at how these groups are put together and look carefully at how we group students for peer conversations in reading. I always tell my students that two brains think better than one, but that might not always be the case because “studies have shown not only that there are differences in the patterns of pair behavior, but more importantly, they suggest that some patterns are more conducive to learning than others” (Storch, 2002, p.120). Grouping then becomes crucial. Storch’s analysis found four relationship patterns (collaborative, dominant/dominant, dominant/passive, and expert/novice), and that there were more instances showing evidence of a transfer of knowledge in the data of the collaborative dyad and the expert/novice dyad than in the data of the dominant/dominant and dominant/passive dyads (Storch, 2002, p.127). This was the main reason that I have a focus group for my TAR which was collaborative but was grouped more in the expert/novice format, which I felt would yield useful as well as large amounts of data.

While the book *Two Old Women* (Wallis, 1993) is often considered to be fictional, with my Indigenous worldview and background with immersion schools and native charter schools, I

consider this story to be non-fiction. As the reader will see in Chapter 4, the literature club format was a perfect fit to observe the students' interpretations of the text, as well as my own role during the discussions.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In comprehensive and critical literacy instruction, there are a variety of methodologies that a teacher can use to ensure that students are engaged and learning literacy based strategies that include language, comprehension, and composing. As a teacher, I look at literacy instruction through the classic lens of small group instruction, guided reading, independent reading, and shared reading.

Since reading is an integral part of all schools across content areas, I have utilized the concept of literature clubs for my Teacher Action Research using an Athabascan traditional narrative. My questions are what meanings do students make during collaborative discussions of culturally relevant literature and what is the role of the teacher during these collaborative discussions?

It was important that my students read a cultural text that related to our 4th grade curriculum at ANCCS in studying the Athabascan Culture. In the story *Two Old Women*, the author Velma Wallis retold this traditional story based on her own words. This authenticity from a Gwich'in person, with events portrayed from an insider's perspective is necessary to ensure culturally responsible practices in the classroom. This story flowed from chapter to chapter with themes emerging or becoming clarified as the story progressed. The story is historical as it highlights an ethical dilemma that Indigenous groups faced in difficult times. The events both highlight culture as well as moral themes that evolve naturally.

The students all focused on the same novel, read and discussed the text, and were responsible for their "jobs," which allowed for them to initiate and engage in dialogue. Dialogue and co-construction was an area of research focus as well in the overall comprehension of cultural text. The interactions between students and teachers was another focus of my

research. As a teacher, I view my job as a guide through this process so that students can experience success and frustration as they maneuver through the text. Therefore, my role as a facilitator was key to ensure continuity of discussion with a focus on key points through student conversations.

Study Design

This thesis reports on a teacher action research (TAR) study. TAR is research done by teachers, principals or any other teaching/learning professionals as a way to gather information on personal teaching practices, student learning, content and overall progression towards positive and effective learning outcomes. This study also followed constructivist grounded theory (CGT), which is a framework for collecting and analyzing qualitative data. Both TAR and CGT are appropriate for my classroom, and will be described in detail in the sections below.

Teacher Action Research

Teacher action research (TAR) is “any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers, principals, school counselors, or other stakeholders in the teaching/learning environment to gather information about how their particular school operates, how they teach, and how well their students learn” (Mills, 2018, p. 10). Teachers, based on their educational experiences, explore and design a research topic that takes commitment to affect change in their classroom through design, implementation, and evaluation. TAR is a systematic inquiry process conducted by a teacher to gain knowledge that will further increase their own educational goals as well as growth in their students’ abilities.

“Action Research is research done by teachers for themselves; it is not imposed on them by someone else” (Mills, 2018, p. 10). As an educator, professional development classes or taking credited classes of interest help to gain knowledge about a subject or to gain credits for

recertification. However, the TAR process is more personalized than taking professional development classes. This process involves four main steps of “identifying areas of focus, collecting and interpreting data, and developing an action plan” (Mills, 2018, p. 10). Table 3.1 below illustrates the steps I took in this TAR.

Table 3.1: Steps of Teacher Action Research

Steps of TAR according to Mills	Steps of TAR in my research
Identify area of need	Since we focused on a traditional story, I used the students’ funds of knowledge as a foundation to read a text that is considered above their level. Students needed to practice summarizing, retelling, and interpreting the story through collaborative dialogue.
Collect Data	Data were collected through chapters 1-8. Data collected include: audio and video recordings of student discussions, student artifacts, and teacher journal.
Analyze and interpret data	All Group 1 (focus group) dialogue was transcribed and analyzed to determine patterns.
Determine an action plan	Data informed future practices with literature clubs.

Mills (2018) gives criteria for selecting an area of focus that “involve teaching and learning with your own, practice, within your locus of control, about something that you’re passionate about, and something that you’d like to change or control” (p. 57). From the beginning, it was important to have a reading focus for my TAR, and since I work at ANCCS, traditional literature was important. I have included traditional Indigenous poetry, narratives, and literature in my classroom since I began teaching. I became inspired after taking a course on Native American Literature at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks and sought to include Indigenous poetry along with traditional and modern narratives in the classroom ever since. In this particular TAR process, I wanted to continue this theme of traditional literature being

embraced and enhanced with collaborative dialogue. Teacher action research is therefore appropriate for my classroom.

Multiple data sources helped me address my research questions. These data sources include audio recordings, video recordings, artifacts such as the students' literature notes, observations, projects, and a teacher journal. This study spanned a six-week period with an additional two-week window to work on a project related to the story.

The data collection period was followed by data interpretation and analysis. This is the critical period for credibility with the focus on organization, authenticity, and word-for-word dialogue transcription. Throughout the TAR process, credibility and trustworthiness is key. In particular, Guba's criteria for validity of qualitative research, consisting of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Mills, 2018, p.155) are essential for teacher researchers to keep in mind as they engage in TAR. Table 3.2 below outlines these criteria of validity, and illustrates how my study is credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable.

Table 3.2 Connections to my TAR

Trustworthiness in TAR (Mills, 2018, pp. 154-156)	Connections to my TAR
Credibility refers to the ability to take into account the complexities that present themselves in a study and to deal with the patterns that are not easily explained.	Practiced triangulation by collecting a variety of data items: documents, video recordings, audio recordings, artifacts. These were coded and analyzed for patterns and themes.
Transferability refers to the beliefs that what is studied is context bound and that the goal of the work is to develop truth statements that can be generalized to larger groups of people.	Collected detailed and descriptive data to allow for comparison to other possible contexts.
Dependability refers to the stability of the data.	Used a variety of data collection methods: students were videotaped, audio taped, and these were transcribed with notes. Field notes and student artifacts were gathered.
Confirmability addresses the neutrality or objectivity of the data that was collected.	A variety of data was collected. Reflections were kept in a field journal.

The TAR process is cyclical in nature from posing questions, gathering data, analyzing data, and going back to the research questions. This process is dynamic and cyclical, it always changes, and requires reflection. Part of reflecting on this process is the need to return to inquiry decisions and interpretations. A reflective stance allows scrutiny of decision making, interpretations of data, data analysis, and assumptions that influence inquiry. When acknowledging that educating our students is the goal, teachers need to vigilantly explore their own pedagogies and change practices as new information comes to the forefront. TAR then becomes a necessary change agent.

There are also strategies that Mills (2018) suggests: Talk little, listen a lot; record observations accurately; begin writing early; let readers see themselves; report fully; be candid; seek feedback; and write accurately. We cannot expect our students to learn the first time as we cannot expect ourselves to analyze fully the first time. With persistence, with repeated exposure, with repeated practice, we learn how TAR changes not only ourselves but the education of our students.

Constructivist Grounded Theory

As part of my study, I followed the work of Charmaz (2014) and constructivist grounded theory (CGT). Within the TAR process, CGT served as the theoretical framework needed to analyze the data collected. When hearing the term constructivist, what comes to my mind is the idea of a teacher who believes that student learning happens when they are actively involved in a process of meaning making and knowledge construction, as opposed to the view that children are sponges and they gain their knowledge passively. So, in relating this to TAR, I am framing my actions to embrace meaning making and knowledge construction through data analysis and coding, as they relate to my research questions, and being mindful when change happens. This

means being open minded, not having fixed ideas before data analysis, and being aware that perspectives change during this process.

“Grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories from the data themselves... coding is the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 113). In going through this process, the focus is on cross comparing my data with my data analysis continually in this ongoing interaction.

“Data form the foundation of our theory and our analysis of these data generate the concepts we construct” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 3). It is necessary to not jump ahead and formulate conclusions too soon; rather, it is important to look for surprises, and ideas that emerge. This process requires continuous involvement and concentrated interaction with my transcriptions as well as unpacking any preconceived notions I have of my students, their strengths, grades, and prior interactions in the classroom. Grounded theory views writing as integral to the process of coding and analysis. Additionally, CGT enables me to view student artifacts as well as my own notes, anecdotal evidence, and journal through a lens of discovery, showing that these artifacts are as important as my transcriptions of classroom dialogue.

CGT provides a process for collecting, interpreting, and analyzing data. Initial coding meant that I examined my transcriptions and determined an action or code for what the dialogue generated. In other words, coding was the first step by taking the data apart line by line and labeling the actions in the data based on what I saw. These labels were developed through interaction with the data. This lens allowed me the initial foundation to determine which sets of codes came together as “chunks” or “threads” of dialogue and determined the next steps of focused coding. In focused coding, I viewed my initial codes through an analytical lens and

asked myself these questions: what appears frequently while sorting through the data, what patterns are emerging, which codes make the most sense to pursue, and what am I finding to be important.

With initial codes done on a line by line basis, focused coding is the next big step in establishing some directions, and I used “focused coding to synthesize, analyze, and conceptualize larger segments of data” (Charmaz, 2018, p. 138). We need to view our initial codes as stepping stones to help shape subsequent and deeper analysis. This process allowed me to see coding with fresh eyes and allowed me to concentrate on emergent patterns, areas of uniqueness, or perhaps grey areas that did not yet have a name. This comparative process allowed me to look at what I initially found, and gave me direction for further analysis. “Comparing codes with codes highlights your sense of the directions your analysis is going and clarifies the theoretical centrality of certain ideas” (Charmaz, 2018, p.140).

In this TAR process, data is key, therefore data analysis is key. These data need to be organized accordingly as patterns emerge. Memo writing then became an important step throughout this process because it allowed me to stop and analyze ideas, codes, and emerging categories early in the research process. This step enabled me to focus on the data and codes in the analyzing process.

Mills (2018) gives criteria for selecting an area of focus that “involve teaching and learning, and should focus on your own practice, within your locus of control, about something that you’re passionate about, and something that you’d like to change or control” (p. 57). As part of my study, I followed the work of Charmaz (2014) and constructivist grounded theory (CGT). Within the TAR process, CGT served as the theoretical framework needed to analyze the data

collected. Overall, CGT and TAR are compatible approaches, as both frameworks allow for an ongoing inquiry.

Setting

Anchorage School District (ASD) educates nearly 47,000 students in over 130 school programs. Minority students are over 50% of the entire school population with Alaska Native/American Indian students being 9% of the population. Most ASD families speak English. However, the remaining 20% speak over 99 languages with 300 speaking Yup'ik. With this diversity in population, there are language charter schools available: Spanish, German, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, and currently Yup'ik Immersion being offered in Fall 2018. French Immersion will be offered in the fall of 2019 (Anchorage School District, 2019). Alaska Native Cultural Charter School (ANCCS) is the only Title 1 Charter School in Anchorage that was created to offer a holistic approach that combines Alaska Native language, culture, history, and traditional practices into an inquiry and standards based program. Title 1 is funded by the Federal Government and is dependent on the number of low-income families in the school. The last census counted 39% of households as earning less than \$25,000; 19% fall below the poverty line (Anchorage School District, 2019; Alaska Native Cultural Charter School, 2019).

The school also includes the 21st Century After School Program, which is grant funded from the U.S. Department of Education (Anchorage School District, 2019). At our school, there are 21 classroom teachers (including Yup'ik, PE, Art) eight of which are Alaska Native or American Indian (with a majority being Yup'ik). Out of the eight teachers, one is a fluent Yup'ik speaker, and two have some speaking familiarity with Yup'ik. As a public preschool through 8th grade charter school, the school welcomes and serves all students.

ANCCS opened with six students in 2007, added preschool in 2009, and added 7th grade in 2010 and 8th grade in 2012. The school offers students a curriculum focused on Alaska Native Culture along with Anchorage School District's Academic Curriculum. The school's curriculum includes teaching methods based in Native ways of instruction and learning with active inquiry/project based learning environments. The curriculum's foundation is based in Native knowledge of the world with involvement of Elders, and Yup'ik Language Instruction. The curriculum centers around 4 themes: Living in Place, Language and Communication, Culture and Expression, and Tribe and Community (Anchorage School District, 2019).

ANCCS offers the same core curriculum as Anchorage School District but has additional curriculum with a focus on an Indigenous group per grade level. All of the Indigenous Alaska Native groups are sequenced from Pre-K to 8th grade per the following table:

Table 3.3 Grade Levels and Indigenous Focus

P	Alaska Native Art/Dance/Storytelling
K	All Alaska Native Cultures
1	Yup'ik, Cup'ik
2	Unangan (Aleut) and Sugpiaq
3	Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian
4	Athabascan
5	Inupiaq, Siberian Yup'ik
6	All Alaska Native Culture Review
7	Alaska Native Government & Issues
8	Alaska Native/American Indian Literature

The curriculum includes classroom and community based activities, which implement the academic and cultural standards as outlined in the Alaska State Standards and the guidelines for culturally responsive schools (Anchorage School District, 2019; Alaska Department of Education & Early Development, n.d.).

The school is situated next to Mt. View, which is the most diverse community in the United States, and East High School, noted also for being the most diverse high school in the U.S. (Tunseth, 2015). This atmosphere is culturally diverse. As teachers, we utilize our community's strengths in language, culture, and identity as well as place based education. Many Yup'ik teachers throughout the state take the same approach. For example, Yup'ik language teacher Rosalie Lincoln stated, "I believe in helping to maintain the community's language and culture, and this [place-based education] is one way I can do that" (Lincoln, 2010, p.8). Since Yugtun language is still spoken widely in Alaska, ANCCS offers Yugtun from K-8 as part of the language program.

Alaska Native Cultural Charter (ANCCS) had 281 students in the 2017-2018 school year. Table 3.4 below outlines the school's demographics, based on the 2017 School's Report Card (grade 3+ testing numbers) (Tableau Public, "Anchorage School District," 2019).

Table 3.4 Demographics

Number of Students	Ethnicity
105	Alaska Native/American Indian
8	Hispanic
42	Two or more races
6	White
1	African American

145	Economically Disadvantaged
18	Students with Disabilities
32	English Language Learners

Participants

As a 4th grade teacher at the Alaska Native Cultural Charter School (ANCCS), three-quarters of my 19 students live in Mt. View. Mt. View has a high Alaska Native population. My students identify as Yup'ik, Inupiaq, Athabascan, and Tlingit. Two of my students receive ELL Services: one whose first language is Yup'ik and one whose home languages are Mexican Spanish and Inupiaq. The students in my classroom mainly speak English. However, the students have a 50-minute Yup'ik class twice a week.

All of my students participated in the literature club activities for this study. I chose six students to be in my focus group for TAR due to the diversity in their language, scores, oral language, as well as reading fluency. At the beginning of the year, my student Aaron tested the highest in reading fluency. He was tested for the gifted program, but fell short. Tom is a kind and soft spoken boy with a great attitude but has difficulty turning in assignments on time. He has a difficult home life with parents splitting, substance abuse, and dad being the primary parent. He and his two sisters attended regular counseling sessions. George, who qualified as ELL, maintained strong connections to his home village. He had inconsistent support because his dad had a traveling work schedule. Martha is classified as an ELL student based on her home language of Spanish. She is very studious, completes all work, but had issues with morning attendance. Karen is very soft spoken and follows the directions at school. She is organized, listens with attention, turns her work in on time, but had attendance issues. Kim has strong vocabulary for a fourth-grade student. At the beginning of the year, her dad told me that her 3rd

grade teacher requested alternative seating due to excessive movement. She has two siblings under three, a toddler and a baby. She speaks about her brother and his issues with juvenile justice. Table 3.5 below gives more information per student.

Table 3.5 Group 1 Participants

Student Name	Strengths	Area of Growth	Personal	At, above, below in Reading
AA: Aaron	Reading, writing, and math	Reading fluency	He loves basketball and sports. Youngest in blended family. Yupik/Inupiaq	At reading level
TE: Tom	Math	Reading fluency, homework return	He caught his first seal in 3 rd Grade and has three sisters. Parents divorced.	At reading level
GS: George	Hands on activities	Spelling, reading fluency, math word problems	He caught his first moose in 3 rd Grade. Two younger siblings. Yugtun household.	Below reading level, ELL student
MD: Martha	Reading, writing, and math	Writing sentence structure, reading fluency	She identifies with her Mexican heritage, has a younger brother, and older teen brothers.	Above reading level, ELL student
KF: Karen	Writing	Reading fluency	Excellent work ethic and youngest at home.	At reading level
KM: Kim	Vocabulary	Math and homework return	Her older brother was housed at a juvenile center at the time of study with two younger siblings.	Below reading level

Instructional Plan

Because the cultural focus in 4th grade is the Athabascan culture, I decided that a culturally relevant novel was appropriate and chose *Two Old Women*, a traditional Gwich'in Athabascan story retold by Velma Wallis. Since this novel was part of our cultural studies, all students read the story and participated in literature clubs. The majority of students enjoyed

reading traditional stories and projects that we have done in the past. We went through a similar group activity with the novel *Toughboy and Sister* by Kirkpatrick Hill where every student read the book and wrote notes in their notebook. However, we focused less on collaborative dialogue or co-construction of answers during that novel study. I wanted students to have the practice of reading and composing notes per chapter to build familiarity and background knowledge during shared reading.

My goal for *Two Old Women* (Wallis, 1993) was to have all students reading the same story to gauge how they independently and collectively read, responded, wrote, and spoke about the events in the story. My initial schedule of events was adjusted as time went on as part of my research. Whether it is formal or not, many teachers spend time researching lessons plans, topics of interest, or different projects where students show what they have learned. Teacher action research is a formal process.

All my fourth graders read this story and had discussions on chapters 1-8 based on the novel *Two Old Women* (Wallis, 1993). I had three discussion groups: Group 1- Focus Group, Group 2- Non-focus students, Group 3 – Pull Out Group (Alternative reading program). In general, instructional activities for each chapter was organized as follows:

- 1) I read each chapter aloud first with no discussion or comments to allow struggling readers a chance to listen to the story and gain familiarity with vocabulary.
- 2) Each student needed to re-read each chapter independently before writing in their notebook.
- 3) Each group determined what their job was before each discussion: summarizer, ideas, luminary, word finder, director, and connector. Students included questions, comments, concerns, and illustrations in their notes.

- 4) Groups were expected to reinforce expectations with each other as far as reading and writing before discussions.
- 5) During literature club discussions, groups 1-3 had the opportunity to be audiotaped or videotaped.
- 6) Artifact collection was ongoing and determined by teacher as needs arose with additional information or a specific topic or theme.
- 7) Artifacts were compiled and students self-assessed themselves according to a sliding scale.
- 8) Quizzes were graded by the teacher.
- 9) A final project was intended to be student driven but due to time constraints, ended up being teacher driven (Bloom ball), with the students choosing the most important events.

Research Procedures

After obtaining permission from the university's Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A), students and parents were given an assent and consent form and 16/19 were returned within the timeframe of my study. One student was pulled out for an alternative school that addresses behavioral issues, one student left for an emergency trip to Mexico, and one did not return the forms. I ended up having three groups: Group 1, Group 2, and Group 3 with Group 1 being my focus group with six participants. These six were chosen because I wanted to include students with a variety of strengths as well as both my English Language Learner (ELL) students.

My research began on March 1, 2018. Due to time constraints and test scheduling, I started with the understanding that there would be breaks, stops and starts in the process. Every

student had a copy of the book. I set up the video camera and tripod in the room at least two weeks before hand so students knew it was in the room and knew it would be used. Students had familiarity with the Tascam audio recorder (about half remembered this process from a TAR project that their teacher conducted the previous year). My focus group was recorded after each chapter (eight total) so that I had data to transcribe and code. Group 1 had four videos. Group 2 met four times with two videos. My Group 3 met five times with two videos. There were some commonalities that all groups shared. All were expected to read the book, and respond in their notebooks to be used for discussions. All filled out their reading inventory that stated how they viewed themselves as a reader, read relevant articles on interior Athabascan artifacts and histories, and met with their groups to have book discussions. They also had additional assignments that were completed for each chapter.

Data Collection

Table 3.6 below lists my chain of events with activities, groups, information about recordings as well as general observations that arose. My field notes are more in depth but this table helped me to see how situations arose, how they were addressed by inclusion of supplemental material as well as inclusion of other student work.

Table 3.6 Timeline of Research

Date	Activity	Group/Student	Approximate length of the activity	General Observations
3/1/18	Written reading inventory	all students 16/18 with permission	20 min.	
3/1/18	Went over book, read back cover, asked students to skim and scan chapters. Read Chapter 1 out loud	all students 17 present	40 min.	students all seemed excited

	2nd read independent			
3/2/18	11:30 After Library, students read and completed job forms and notes.	All students	25 min.	students were confused about jobs.
3/5/18	First Discussion on Chapter 1 of Two Old Women Focus Group for TAR	Group 1 / Raz 1 and 2 (six students in group)	20 min.	some hesitancy and gaps in recording
3/6/18 3 p.m.	Read Chapter 2 out loud before lunch (11:30 p.m.) Students wrote responses to chapter. Writing block, worked on chapter 1 questions for quiz	17 students	25 min. 20 min.	most got $\frac{3}{4}$ way done with responses
3/7/19	Quiz for Chapter 1 for all students	All students	20 min.	
3/12-16	SPRING BREAK			
3/19/18	Student worked on events map/concept map for Chapter 2 Read aloud chapter 3 for 15 minutes at 3:10 p.m.	17 students	25 min.	
3/22/18	Met with Group 1 (Raz 1&2) for Chapter 3 discussion Handed out readings on adze, birch bark basket, and snare.	6 students All	20 min 30 min	still getting students engaged Schema
3/26/18	11:30 a.m. Read aloud Chapter 4 12:40 a.m. asked students to finish	All students	25 min.	

	notes. 2:20 Discussion with Group 1	6 students	20 min.	more independent
3/27/18	11:25 a.m. Ch. 4 Quiz	All	25 min.	artifact
3/28/18	11:30 - 11:55 Ch. 5 read out loud to all students After testing, students watched Bizarre Foods: Muskrat and Moose Fat	All students	25 min. 45 minutes	PEAKS TESTING common foods in interior
3/29/18	11-11:15 a.m. Read Ch. 5 Asked students to write notes for chapter	All students	55 minutes	
3/30/18	Discussion with Group 1 (Raz 1 & 2) for Chapter 5	6 students	20 min.	student made connections to Toughboy & Sister
4/2/18	11:45 Read aloud Ch. 6 - asked students to choose jobs and re-read chapter before writing notes	All students		
4/3/18	11:35 a.m. continued to work on chapter 6 notes 3 p.m. Group 1 Discussion on Chapter 6	All students 6 students	20 minutes. 20 min.	 director controlled tascam
4/5/18	PEAKS TESTING A.M. Read aloud Ch. 7	All students	15 min.	I did not discuss vocabulary as I read aloud
4/6/18	Discussion with Group 1 on Chapter 6 to 7	6 students	20 min.	worked on character traits vs. emotions Had to figure out zoom

4/11/18	Discussion with Chapter 8	6 students	23 min.	
4/26/18	12 Panel Bloom Ball	All students	2 weeks	4 of my 6 students in Group 1 completed all panels

During the research period, as a teacher researcher, I needed to hold myself accountable for my actions like I hold myself accountable for my lesson plans and grades. As a teacher researcher, I need evidence that is both systematic and cyclical, that demonstrates how information is accessed, what the students say and do, and this credibility will show through the triangulation of data: through journal entries and anecdotal notes, recordings, artifacts, and written transcriptions of these events. Table 3.7 below shows each data source that I collected throughout my TAR.

Table 3.7 Research activities per chapter

Chapter	Instructional activities	Research activities in addition to writing in notebook
1	Pre-reading discussion, read aloud and re-read of Chapter 1	3/1-2, First Discussion on 3/5/18 Recorded audio/video Groups 1 Chapter 1 Quiz completed on 3/7/18 3/7 Recorded Group 2
2	Read aloud and independent read	3/19 Students given an events/concept map
3	Read aloud and independent read	Additional reading on adze, birch bark basket, and snare 3/22/18 Group 1 and Group 2
4	Read aloud and independent read	Started on 3/23/18. Additional activity on Math in a Cultural Concept, additional read on snow shoes and skin scrapers. 3/26 Discussion Group 1 and Group 3 Quiz on 3/27/18 and Discussion Group 1
5	Read aloud and independent read	Started on 3/28/18. Group watched episode of Bizarre Foods in Chistochina with Ahtna Athabascans. <i>Muskrats and Moose Fat</i> showcased Ahtna Athabaskan foods. Discussions 3/30/18 with Group 1-3
6	Read aloud and independent read	Read aloud on 4/2/18. Started recordings on 4/3/18. 4/3 Discussion Group 1. 4/3 Group 2. 4/5 Group 3
7	Read aloud and independent read	Read aloud on 4/5/18. Additional work on character traits and emotions. 4/6 Discussion with Group 1

8	Read aloud and independent read	Read aloud 4/11/18. Discussion with Group 1. Started poster for theme on 4/13/18, typed on 4/16/18.
Project	Bloom Ball	12 panel dodecahedron completed on 4/26/18

As a teaching staff at ANCCS, we have been focused on student interventions in reading and math. As a Native Charter School, we are change agents in the school's environment who are looking at the cultural engagement, enhancement, and culturally responsive methodologies. If I go back to my original statements, that teacher action research is a process that teachers go through in order to continually improve their knowledge and skill sets, TAR affects positive change in the way we critically and mindfully teach our students. Teacher engagement is student engagement.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings

This chapter presents an analysis of the data. I first provide an overview of the instructional sequence, then present an analysis of the data, along with my reflections during each stage of the instructional sequence.

On March 1, 2018, the 4th graders at Alaska Native Cultural Charter School in Anchorage started literature conversations with *Two Old Women*. This is a story written by Velma Wallis that is based on a Gwich'in Athabascan traditional oral narrative. This retelling is about band of Gwich'in people along the Arctic Circle in Alaska that is in survival mode during a harsh winter where food is scarce. With difficult decisions to make, with not enough food for the band and to ensure that the majority of the tribe survives, the chief left the old women behind to die. This award winning story is well known in Alaska and is used within Anchorage School District (ASD) middle schools. Based on this background knowledge, I had to format this process with *Two Old Women* with specific scaffolding in place to assist the 4th graders with higher level literature. This is the basis for my research questions: 1) What meanings do students make during collaborative discussions of culturally relevant literature?; 2) What is the role of the teacher during these collaborative discussions?

Overview of the Instructional Sequence

As with most shared reading events, we followed a familiar process to introduce this traditional story. I handed out copies of the book and a log booklet (for student notes). Each student kept a copy in their desk and a copy of the book log to write notes per chapter. Before reading Chapter 1, we previewed the book by looking at the cover. Students were asked to flip through the book by skimming and scanning. Afterwards, I read the synopsis on the back of the book as students followed along. As I read the blurb, I stopped at three vocabulary words and

asked students to talk to their shoulder partner. Students turned and talked to a neighbor and discussed betrayal, friendship, and survival.

After the students' partner discussions, I began to read Chapter 1 out loud with no discussion. It was important for students to hear the story first, especially struggling readers, to focus on meaning and not decoding since this book is read at the middle school in my school district. This was typically a two-day process with the pattern of teacher read aloud first and followed by an independent read per chapter. The following day after library on March 2, the students reread Chapter 1 and filled out their notes. Student Groups 1-3 were asked to determine jobs on their own and write in their notes. These jobs changed from chapter to chapter through negotiation and self-determination and allowed students to view the story through a different lens. As stated above, this was part of the scaffolding of the text and to have students follow literature-based jobs. These jobs included the summarizer who summarized the main events of the story. The luminary looked for important quotes in the story. The connector made connections to self, text-to-text, or text to world. The connector also accessed their funds of knowledge with the events of the story. The vocabulary finder found critical words, unknown vocabulary, or words that incited interest. The idea person was to find main ideas in the text to further explore. Finally, the discussion director was to lead the discussions and allow all participants a voice in the process. However, the expectation was that students read the story twice (listening and re-reading), determine their assigned jobs for literature club discussion, and write notes. This was also the time where students drew illustrations to highlight their visualizations of important scenes after they read. If students had trouble writing events from the chapter, I asked them to draw an image first as a starting point prior to writing.

Figure 4.1 below is an example of Karen's writing for her job in gathering ideas. Her illustration shows the women going back to a place where food was plentiful. She also wrote questions, comments, and connections. This also illustrates the format used for notes after initial reading and before discussions. Students referred back to their notes during discussions and were critical for ensuring dialogue (see Appendix D).

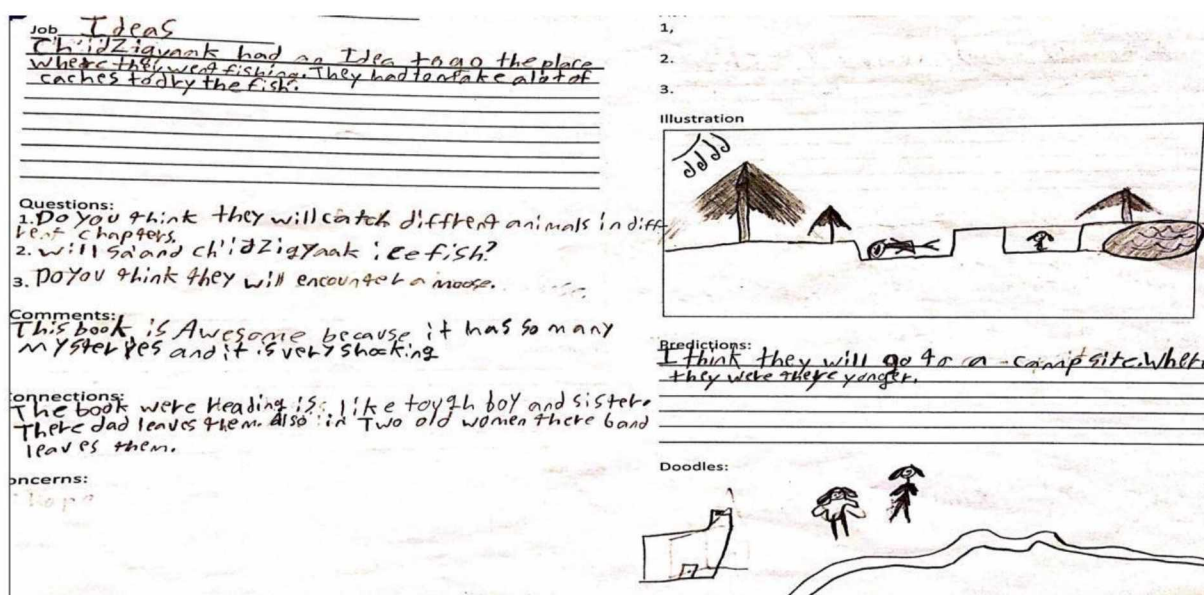


Figure 4.1 Example from Karen's notes

The first discussion with Group 1 occurred on March 5 after students read Chapter 1 and wrote their notes. The student book log for their notes evolved from prior experience and prior work using reading organizers earlier in the school year. I looked at a variety of organizers online that used a whole sheet per literature club job, to what students did earlier in the year with the fictional Athabascan novel *Toughboy and Sister* (Hill, 1999), to the above sample of the updated format that ended up working for the students.

Students read the novel *Toughboy and Sister* by Kirkpatrick Hill and had familiarity with reading and responding using graphic organizers. I created a half sheet for students to write a

summary, thoughtful prediction, illustration, favorite quote, important ideas, and “I wonder” comments or questions. After initial practice using this half sheet form, students then wrote their own version in their reading composition notebook. During this process which lasted from October to November, students read each chapter and wrote in their composition notebook as a center activity during reading block. This was the first novel that students read together as a precursor to *Two Old Women* (Wallis, 1993), with the main difference being a lack of organized discussion time. During the reading of *Two Old Women* (Wallis, 1993), students were asked to read, write, and respond to notes with each other during cultural reading time or during blocked reading time with no teacher input. This allowed students time to read independently and generate notes in their notebooks. My goal was to have all students reading the same story to gauge how they independently and collectively read, responded, wrote, and spoke about the events in the story. All my fourth graders read *Two Old Women* (Wallis, 1993) and had discussions on Chapters 1-8.

Students in my class were familiar with using graphic organizers before, during, and after the reading activities, so written response was not unfamiliar. Students used organizers based on the text, purpose of organizer, and whether the organizer was used as a general story mapping sheet or whether it focused on specific reading strategies. I created my own organizers as needed, and these log note sheets evolved based on need. In prior iterations, I had predictions, questions, connections, summary, unfamiliar words, and visualizing. As I was preparing for this TAR and *Two Old Women* (Wallis, 1993), I decided to add comments, concerns, and questions. After reading each chapter a second time, students knew to write in their notes as either the discussion director, idea person, summarizer, word finder, connector, or luminary. The section on questions, comments, connections, and concerns was to affirm that the thought process was

needed and writing these down could help them prepare for the discussion, in addition to the literature job. My thinking was their particular job could focus students' conversations while the rest could generate additional topics for dialogue. This function proved useful as the students met for chapter discussions 1-8. This format was lengthy but doable since students used prior knowledge and experience as far as reading strategies, skills, and reading vocabulary were concerned.

Based on the school schedule, testing schedule, and culture week, this TAR process of students' reading each chapter, note taking as written responses leading to oral responses took time with students starting on March 1, 2019, and completing the Chapter 8 discussion on April 11, 2018.

March 6 was the start of Chapter 2. I read aloud the chapter before lunch, and students re-read the chapter that afternoon. The majority of students completed some of their notetaking that afternoon, but faced interruptions that affected completion of work. Students wrote additional information in their notes in the afternoon before dismissal. On March 7, students took their first quiz on the chapter that assessed recall and analysis of events of story. All but five finished that day. Students in Group 1 had their second recorded conversation that day. I facilitated less this conversation but continued with prompting and eliciting for comments to keep the dialogue going. Students said they were enjoying the process, understood the directions, and understood the idea of jobs in their written notes. This process continued through April 11, 2018 with Chapter 8 and the students' final discussions in their literature club. The whole class had a lesson on the themes of the story on April 13 followed by producing a theme poster per student. They then completed a final project (a Bloom Ball), which was a visual representation of the events of the story. Each panel illustrated either literary elements or events

of the story which were then connected into a ball shape. The students then had two weeks to work on their final project of a 12 panel Bloom Ball which was completed on April 26, 2018.

In total, this was an eight-week process. The students read the chapters, wrote in their notes, and met in small groups to discuss the events and their take-aways from the readings. I sat and interacted with the students, audio and video taped the interactions, then transcribed the events.

Analysis of Literature Club Discussions

Part of this TAR process was choosing what text to read. As I stated before, the curriculum at ANCCS focuses on Alaska Native Groups per grade. Fourth grade is all about the Athabascans of the interior and is the main reason why I chose *Two Old Women* (Wallis, 1993). Storytelling is important to Indigenous people. Stories speak to the history of the people, events of importance, values and belief systems, and how things came to be. This also pertains to my TAR questions in that this is a culturally responsive unit that addresses the Athabascan values of hard work, sharing, cooperation, and responsibility to village (or in the case of my fourth grade students, responsibility to their class). Sharing and cooperation connect to my research question related to collaborative discussions. Responsibility to village means understanding how things came to be, the history of the people through storytelling. These values thus led to the following research questions: what meanings do students make during collaborative discussions of culturally relevant literature and what is the role of the teacher during these collaborative discussions?

In order to address these questions, I examined data from Group 1: eight audio recordings, three video recordings, student notes from reading, excerpts from the book, and a

teacher journal. Sample interactions are shown in Appendix B. Table 4.1 below shows how I organized my data into data points in order to see how these relate to my research questions.

Table 4.1 Organization of Data Points

Text from book	Dialogue	Student Notes	Comments
To see original text and gauge how students interpreted the text in their notes	To see how students' collaborative dialogue contributes to co-construction of answers	To see how student notes addressed literature job as well as questions, comments, connections, concerns, topics of interest, illustrations and predictions	To see how teacher and student interactions, student to student interactions added to common understandings through prompting and eliciting

During the initial stages of analysis, I first transcribed all the audio dialogues per chapter. I wrote down what students said, how I responded, and how the dialogue evolved. Then I watched the three video recordings per conversation to note how non-verbal communication affected the dialogue. Finally, I reviewed students' notes and found relationships between what the students read, wrote, and drew before discussions. This was an important step in viewing the modalities in their written notes with illustrations and doodling. This illustrates why the usage of notes as an organizational tool works with younger students in reading higher level text. These frames are used to organize their thoughts, focus on their jobs, and add additional details to aid their conversations. The upcoming analysis follows my journey in this TAR process from 'crickets' to 'connections and interactions.'

Crickets and “unsurity.”

In this beginning chapter called *Hunger and cold take their toll*, the band called the People are introduced along with the main characters Sa' and Ch'idzigyaak. In this harsh environment, during the cold winter months, the People are starving. It was not unheard of in

these difficult times, to leave the old and frail behind, so all resources benefit the younger and healthier. This is what befalls Sa' and Ch'idzigyaak. What follows is an epic journey discussed by the fourth graders at ANCCS and what is demonstrated in Table 4.2 is a list of student names and their jobs in this beginning discussion.

Table 4.2 Chapter 1 Students and Jobs

Student	Job
KM: Kim	Word Finder
KF: Karen	Connector
TE: Tom	Luminary
AA: Aaron	Director
MD: Martha	Ideas
GS: George	Connector

The students decided their jobs, read and reread Chapter 1, took notes to be prepared, and began discussions. As I turned on the video recorder, started the audio recordings, kids sat there and said nothing. I waited, but still no voices, just “crickets.”

T: Ok, who's the discussion director?

Ok, you open up to your paper please...Ok, please start

Aaron: the first one

Teacher: uh huh

Aaron: do I Say Chapter 1 stuff (whispers)

Teacher: do what you think is natural

From this starting point, I felt panic. Right away I learned that modeling is needed to ensure that the students feel comfortable, and that I cannot assume that students are going to know what to

do. I also realized that even the most outspoken and verbally adept students felt unsure about the process in the beginning. The students felt excited yet nervous. They knew that they were going to be audio and video recorded. As I pressed the buttons and started recording, the following occurred after the initial introductions.

In this beginning section, I found myself taking over and asking students to state their job to get the dialogue started. Aaron, as the discussion director, began the dialogue with “they should talk about how, how to survive, they should say, we are not going to die, think about living and trying.” Aaron wrote in his notes so he read this out loud. This is an example of how their literature club job allows students to refer back to their notes with a starting point in the dialogue. Even though he read the sentence out loud, it gave him confidence since he was not thinking what to say randomly, he wrote beforehand to contribute to the overall dialogue as a whole. Students went around taking turns and adding to the initial statement that the women should be confident they can survive, that they spoke of trying to live or die trying, and paraphrased at the end by Martha, as the idea person, saying “ah, the idea is to survive and be hopeful that maybe one of them will come back” (referring to the pack).

After the initial exchange, the students went into the following exchange where students went around the table and just read what they wrote with their job requirements with little discussions following. This is not what I had in mind. In my thinking, the students would know to discuss what they said, to add on to what was said using their own words or adding in additional information to the person’s job.

Martha: I am the idea person and my idea is to survive and the elder be, and the boy took, took the bone, on the tree and one other elder, the other elder grabbed it from, **the main idea to survive and betrayed, and they left the elders**

George: connector, the women could probably survive in the the wilder, wilderness

Karen: my job is the word finder, I found words like nomad, penetrating, and that that (?)

Tom: my job is the luminary and I do important quotes like starr and the council and I have arrived at the decision

Tom: ok, what are some questions that you wrote down that you want to ask your teammates, go ahead Kim


Kim: do you think they're going to get the hatchet to kill an animal?

Based on the above exchange, I learned that students knew to write down their jobs but did not realize that this was a discussion topic, conversation starter, or an opening to add on additional information from their individual points of view. I also learned that I had to interact or intervene more with these beginning dialogues to ensure that information was flowing in a way that benefited dialogue and incorporated the students' points of view.

Around seven minutes in the first discussion, I prompted the students by asking “what’s happening in Chapter 1?” Aaron responded as the director and said, “the people came to a decision to leave the older women behind because they don’t have much food so they gonna leave to another camp.” Martha responds in the following (see Excerpt 4.1). See full dialogue in Appendix B and Martha’s role sheet in Appendix E.

Excerpt 4.1. Martha explains the betrayal.

Text from book (Wallis, 1993, p. 3)	Dialogue	Student notes	Comments
<p>The chief would instruct the younger men to set up shelters for these two old women each time the band arrived at a new campsite, and to provide them with wood and water. The younger women pulled the two elder women's possessions from one camp to the next and, in turn, the old women tanned animal skins for those who</p>	<p>Martha: what happened so far, the chief of the pack, I think, um, decides to leave the elders because it's winter time and it's hard to get food, and um., what, um, the old women whenever um, the younger man helped them,</p>		<p>Illustration from Martha</p> <p>Aaron writing in notes during dialogue</p> <p>Ideas in notes from Martha</p>

	she would give him, um tanned skin	 <p>[The idea is to survival and elderly and the boy tnotnok bone on the tree and one of the elder grabed it. The main idea is to survival and betraad. And they left the elders]</p>	Paraphrasing main event and adding details.
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In looking at the relationship between what Martha read, what she wrote and drew, and finally what she said, I could see how this portion of student dialogue focuses on the first major event of the book. Martha paraphrased from what she wrote in her notes. She did not add “the idea is to survival...the main idea is to survival and betraad..” She also refers to the text when she says that since the women are old, the band helps with shelter, food, water, and younger women pulling their supplies. This excerpt from the book highlights how the pack and elders work together. The pack is both egalitarian and utilitarian, and the old women helped in their own way by tanning skins and furs that are needed for clothes, household, and hunting. Martha’s illustrations show a woman pulling possessions from camp to camp. When the women were initially forced out of the pack, the grandson left his hatchet on a tree for his grandmother. This went against everything he was taught as a young man as tools were the lifeline for survival. Martha spoke about the grandson leaving the “bone” (hatchet) in the tree which ended up being crucial in the women’s survival. She addressed that at the end of this thread by saying “he left the thing that was on his belt on the tree (the hatchet) and so Ch’idzigyaak grabbed it.” Actually Sa’ grabbed the hatchet, which was not caught in this discussion. However, in later discussions,

students determined through dialogue who did what. The students also came up with reasons why the chief left them: “they don’t have much food...always have to make their tents...it might make them go slower...and no one was surprised because they thought it was for the best.” In this thread of dialogue, students identified the main event of abandonment, paraphrased and added details and reasons as to why this happened, and analyzed why the band did nothing and thought it was for the best. Martha also added the important detail of the grandson, Shruh Zhuu, leaving the hatchet behind. Tom added that that the daughter Ozhii Nelii “gave them a moosehide” which later turned into a discussion on babiche. Both of these items were instrumental tools in the two old women living and surviving.

I asked students what they learned so far around minute 15. Kim starts off by paraphrasing what was stated earlier “I learned that they had to leave the elderly behind so that they could move faster...” and followed by Martha, “I learned that, sometimes, you got to do stuff to survive and I learned it, that in winter it can get bad sometime.”

Teacher: ok, just as a reminder, tell me what you learned so far from the book?

George: I learned that...

Kim: **I learned that they had to leave the elderly behind** so that they could move faster and have a special to be...

AA: (whispers) that's what's what I was going to say, dangit

MD: **I learned that, sometimes you got to do stuff to survive and I learned it that in winter it can get bad sometime**

KF: **I learned that you have to do stuff to survive like...like...to ask questions when you're not supposed to**

T: you don't have to raise your hand, just talk when you feel it's a good time to talk

AA: **ah, I think I learned that some people have to do the wrong thing to do the right thing**

T: anything else you want to add?

TE: I know they leave them behind to go faster but **it's kind of disrespectful to elders**

This was a pivotal point in this first chapter discussion as this statement led into the area of theme and morality in the difficult choice the chief made. This was the first time the people in this particular band left elders behind. However, it was not unheard of in the past since winters are harsh and the land unforgiving.

Reflection on crickets and “unsurity”.

The students demonstrated excitement in the initial phases of this literature process and I am pleased to note that this excitement level was consistent throughout each chapter discussion. The students wanted to be recorded and wanted to be videotaped. The two students who participated in similar recordings in third grade had greater familiarity with this process. They stated to me that this book was exciting, that they wanted to be part of this recording process. They read and did their jobs as required. However, this introduction to literature discussions did not happen the way I had planned. I was hoping that the students would engage in collaborative dialogue, but the conversation was stilted in that students mostly just read their notes. When the discussion stayed on a particular topic with no background references, I realized that I had to intervene more in this process, to redirect when needed, and to elicit additional information to ensure flow of dialogue and information needed for comprehension. With this being said, I was impressed by what the students did say in Chapter 1. Aaron stated that students needed to talk about “how to survive...we are not going to die, think about living and not dying.” Students knew right away that the theme of survival was key in this book. Karen also knew that food was the problem, that the People were starving, which Martha followed by stating another theme, that the women were betrayed. Martha also reminded the students that this happened in the Arctic

and with the Gwich'in Athabaskan. The students also discussed that people have to survive and that they do “stuff” to survive. Aaron then followed with “I learned that some people have to the wrong thing to do the right thing.” That was the sentence I was waiting for, that the students realized that this decision to leave the old women was beyond difficult, that it was a heart wrenching decision that no person should have to make.

Easing into dialogue.

Chapter 2 finds the two old women abandoned by the People and family. They are filled with despair, especially Chi'idzigyaak who has a daughter and grandson. Sa' stated “so I say if we are going to die, my friend, let us die trying, no sitting” (Wallis, 1993, p.16). This determination and show of strength gets through to Chi'idzigyaak who knows that the harsh environment helps no one. The women gather embers, start a fire, and see that the chief left them their belongings. Sa' throws the hatchet and kills a squirrel for them to eat. They drink the squirrel broth slowly, filling their empty bellies, and realize how little food they were getting before. They set rabbit snares from the babiche left by the daughter which resulted in snaring one rabbit. This amount of food bolsters the women's strength and shows them that they still know how to utilize the survival skills learned years ago. This is what the students read before beginning their discussions for Chapter 2 and the choosing of jobs. Table 4.3 shows the student jobs for chapter two.

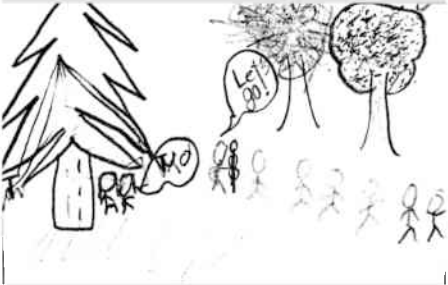
Table 4.3 Chapter 2 Students and Jobs

Student	Job
KM: Kim	Summarizer
KF: Karen	Word Finder
TE: Tom	Director

AA: Aaron	Connector
MD: Martha	Luminary
GS: George	Ideas

In the book, Wallis explains that leaving elders during times of starvation was done before. By making the decision to leave the old women behind, the chief gives the rest of the tribe a better chance to survive. Their time, food, and energy go towards the younger and healthy who have a better chance to survive and not on the elders with limited time to live. In the following excerpt, Aaron goes into the old adage of “does the means justify the end” which showed that the 4th grader understood the decision that the Chief made even they did not agree with it. As a teacher, I found this section to be profound because the children understood the events of the story, the difficult decisions that had to be made, and the feelings that these decisions inspired, and ultimately, how this bolstered the women’s courage and will to survive. The chief knew that this decision was difficult, but it was his job as a leader to ensure survival of the tribe.

Excerpt 4.2. Aaron makes profound deduction

Text from book (Wallis, 1993, p.13)	Dialogue	Images from notes	Comments
<p>The large band of famished people slowly moved away, leaving the two women sitting in the same stunned position on their piled spruce boughs. Their small fire cast a soft orange glow onto their weathered faces. A long time passed before the cold brought Ch'idzigyaak out of her stupor. She was aware of her daughter's helpless gesture but believed that her only child should have defended her even in the face of danger. The old woman's heart softened as she thought of her grandson. How could she bear hard feelings toward one so young and gentle? The others made her angry, especially her daughter! Had she not trained her to be strong? Hot, unbidden tears ran from her eyes.</p>	<p>Aaron: ah, I think I learned that some people have to do the wrong thing to do the right thing</p>	 <p>[AA drawing image of the People leaving the two old women behind. Women are saying “no”]</p>	<p>Aaron and Martha had their hand up. Both spoke up. Aaron's comment spoke to the moral dilemma of the situation</p>

		while Chief tells people “Let’s go.”]	
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Aaron’s statement about doing the wrong thing to do the right thing speaks to the chief’s decision making, to make a sacrifice for the greater good of the band, which was difficult for him. This showed me that Aaron understood the nature of this whole exchange. His saying this out loud allowed the other participants to hear his insight and add this to their common understanding. His illustration shows the band leaving the two old women behind and highlights the quote “the large band of famished people slowly moved away, leaving the two women sitting in the same stunned position on their piled spruce boughs” (Wallis, 1993, p. 13). This image also shows the Pack marching way, leaving the two women under a large spruce tree. The trees are huge, illustrating how small the people are in the wilderness. This also shows how the people, despite their personal feelings in the matter, leaving uniformly away like soldiers that were given orders. Such was the life of the People. Their leader, the Chief, made a decision, and to go against the decision was to jeopardize yourself (see Appendix F).

The rest of the dialogue followed, with Tom and George both focusing on how this is so disrespectful in Athabascan values. In the beginning of the school year, we had a project where the students viewed the Athabascan Values poster made by the Alaska Native Knowledge Network (Appendix C). Students chose a value and determined its meaning through examples. The one that many students related to is Respect for Elders and Others. Since this is a shared

value among Native groups, the fact that these two old women were abandoned and left to fend for themselves was disconcerting. This thread was completed by Martha who said “I think they felt a little disappointed because her daughter didn’t even stand up” and by Aaron who concluded by “I think they felt left out because the people didn’t react to the council what they had to say.” On page five of Chapter 1, the chief made his announcement to leave the old women behind and “his eyes quickly scanned the crowd for reactions. But hunger and cold had taken their toll, and the People did not seem to be shocked” (Wallis, 1993, p. 5). Since students discussed events from Chapter 1, this insight showed me that students used what the other students said before them, added on their own points or paraphrased what was said before.

This beginning pattern shows me how the students co-constructed thematic meaning based on their own knowledge of values and based on previous events of the text. Students also addressed themes in a later poster where they matched a theme with a critical sentence of quote from the book. Chapter 1: *Hunger and cold take their toll* laid the groundwork for continuing academic conversations around this story of survival and Chapter 2 followed with the way the women changed their minds with the determination to survive at all costs, knowing that death was imminent in doing nothing.

Chapter 2: *Let us die trying* was another important chapter for the students. We began this conversation on March 7, 2018. The initial section of this conversation had the students focusing on one event of the story when Sa’ caught the squirrel by throwing the hatchet, which is why Tom started the process with his question on Sa’s strength and whether it hurt her arm.

Tom: my job is the director and I would keep the discussion going. How much strength does SA have, because she threw the hatchet

Martha: I think she's pretty strong because she was able to hit the squirrel from far away

Aaron: I am the connector and.... {you're supposed to answer the question?}

Tom: how much strength does Sa have?

Kim: I think she has a lot of strength because.....(long pause)


George: I think she has enough to go through the winter

Tom: didn't it hurt her arm?

Martha: I think it did, a little bit because she's an elder

Further into the dialogue, Martha highlighted a particular quote relating to survival (Excerpt 4.3).

Excerpt 4.3. Martha focuses on survival

Text from book p.28	Dialogue	Images from notes	Comments
<p>Seeing tears fill her friend's eyes at the finality of her words, Sa' continued in a voice heavy with feeling. "We are going to prove them wrong! The People. And death." She shook her head, motioning into the air. "Yes, it awaits us, this death. Ready to grab us the moment we show our weak spots. I fear this kind of death more than any suffering you and I will go through. If we are going to die anyway, let us die trying."</p>	<p>Martha: my job is luminary and I have to find quotes like "let us die try</p> <p>Teacher: so what does that mean "let us die trying."</p> <p>Martha: I think it means you'll try to survive through the winter</p> <p>Pause</p>	<p>Chapter <u>2</u> Pages <u>15-26</u></p> <p>Job <u>Luminary</u></p> <p><u>My job as luminary I have to find quotes like "let us die trying or like many times I have done that but never did I think I would do it again."</u></p>  <p>[My job as luminary I have to find quotes like "let us die trying or like "many times I have done that, but never did I think I would do it again."]</p>	<p>Job as luminary generated the dialogue</p> <p>Based on student job from notes and illustration from chapter 2.</p> <p>Students self-select literature club job before note taking and discussions.</p>

After Tom started off the discussions, he went around the group and asked the students to state their job, ask a question, or make a comment. Again, this shows how the student job is a jump off point for their dialogue as Tom started with his question. In this excerpt, Martha starts

off reciting her quote in her job as the luminary. In this chapter, the women vow to survive after being left to die by their band. This section shows how she only read half of her job and stopped when I prompted for additions. Aaron added on by saying they will not be lazy, followed by Karen saying to work harder. When it came to Kim, she gave a specific example by saying they will not stop hunting for animals. Afterwards, Martha read the second half of her quote and said “many times have I done that but never did I think I’d do it again.” This relates back to Tom’s job and concludes this dialogue thread by Martha saying that Sa’ never thought she would throw a hatchet at a squirrel again. Martha’s illustration showing the two women walking alone, in a desolate looking environment of trees with no leaves shows how the women have to struggle to survive in the harsh winter environment. Martha’s illustration indicates the women walking alone in the desolate forest (see Appendix G). The imagery invoked by the picture adds to the text in how the women have to not only fight the elements, but the idea that they have only each other and not their tribe to help them survive. Illustrations like this one show how the student relates and adds imagery to text. The old adage, “a picture is worth a thousand words,” shows how a complex idea can be conveyed in a single image. In this case, the image with her text of “let us die trying” is compelling. This was a meaningful thread since it included both thematic as well as practical information about recalling old skills. This chapter allowed students to see that their background knowledge on survival is key and that the women need to work together with courage and determination to survive.

Reflection on easing into dialogue.

As the facilitator, I had to step in and bring the conversation back to a summary since the students were focusing on a specific incident in the story. I wanted to go back to the events prior that led up to the squirrel and hatchet event. When students began their discussions, they asked

their questions, spoke what they wrote on their notes, or asked specific questions. In this case, he asked a specific question which focused on one incident. After refocusing the students, the discussions became more focused. Kim summarized the setting of snares and the killing of the squirrel. This interaction showed how the conversation went from specific, to general, and then back to the squirrel incident. As the teacher, I had to determine when to prompt, elicit, or give a direct answer. In this situation, I showed the students that circling back is okay and that I did not disregard Tom's initial question. This was background information that was needed for Martha to step in as the luminary. This also showed the students that what they had to say was important, that we do not disregard what they said, but let them know that background information is needed in order to get back to their question or comment. In the following excerpt, Martha as the luminary, brings up the quote "let us die trying" as a discussion topic along with "never did I think I would do it again." Both of these quotes refer back to the women's initial phases of survival and catching the squirrel with the hatchet. It is also important to note that the students were able to find those important quotes on their own.

Students' use of background knowledge.

While Chapter 2 dealt with the women hunting to survive, the students' conversation showed amazement at Sa' hitting the squirrel with a hatchet which led to an interesting exchange. Aaron said "I think it was amazing because don't really see elders hunt like that." Kim followed with "I think it's pretty cool because men are usually supposed to be the ones hunting...". George followed by "I didn't really know that really old hunter can hunt." In this next thread, the students had this conversation.

A: Connector. One time I saw my grandma hunt an animal at Togiak, also I survived for not eating for a day

T: Do you have women or elders who hunt in your family?

GS: my upi (grandfather) and my mom

T: what do they hunt for?

GS: my mom hunts for fish, duck, and my dad, my upi hunted for a moose

TE: my grandpa is 76, he goes halibut fishing and he goes deer hunting

AA: my grandpa, he's like 74, and he always hunts moose, and our freezer always gets full

MD: my brother goes hunting for deer, and he likes he shoot arrows

T: what about you?

MD: no

KF: my grandpa hunts for moose

T: what about you?

KF: no

KF: my brother hunted 2 moose

TE: I hunt seal um, ptarmigan

GS: I hunt moose, bird, fish, and reindeer

T: here in Anchorage?

GS: Akiachuk

AA: This summer I'm going to Togiak and start hunting for my first time

It is understandable why students showed amazement at Sa' hunting a squirrel with a hatchet and the women catching a rabbit with a snare. That is why I prompted them by asking who hunts in their family, especially women and elders. Students needed to be reminded how this background knowledge relates to their funds of knowledge about the necessity of hunting for

more than food, for continuity of traditions, and for the whole of idea of subsistence as an integral part of Alaskan Indigenous culture. This relates to their reading of the text, how the old women used their funds of knowledge to hunt and how the students learn, experience, and carry on the hunting generationally. George, Aaron, Tom, Kim all said that their grandparents hunted. While the girls stated that their brothers hunted, George and Tom both hunted themselves. George's uncle forwarded me a video of him catching his first moose in Akiachak. George gave me permission to show the students in class. When Tom was in 3rd grade, he caught his first seal. As part of giving away your first catch, he donated the seal to the school to be butchered and eaten for culture week. The meat was cooked, dried, as well as the fat rendered for seal oil to be given away. Martha was the only one who mentioned her brother shooting arrows. It was during this time that I said I grew up with a bow and arrow and saw my own mother setting snares in the trees. In the prior year, when these students were in 3rd grade, we had a hunter come in and show the students how to set up snares. Aaron and George were both in that group. This background knowledge and funds of knowledge are necessary for connections in the reading of culturally relevant texts, and students were reminded that they are part of a hunting and gathering society.

Reflection on students' use of background knowledge.

As the students gained familiarity with the process, they realized that they controlled the conversation with each other. They realized that I was still there to facilitate as needed, to ask for clarifications or elicitations. They gained confidence during the process and still maintained respect for each other during the conversations. They waited for their turns, did not interrupt and were asked for their input.

Things begin to fall in place.

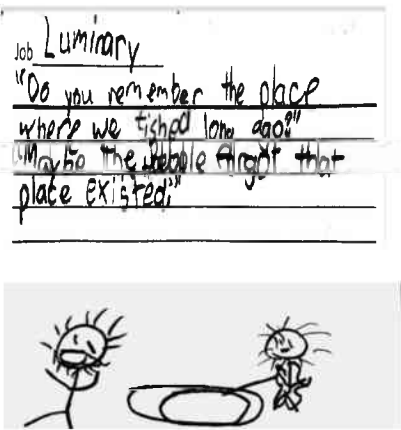
Chapter 3 is about the women recalling old skills. The women are realizing that they are more capable than they thought despite their old age. All their former complaining, aches and pains, seem like nothing compared to trying to survive on their own. The women have all the knowledge, skills and resources needed to survive so they utilize their funds of knowledge in the making of snowshoes for their long trek. They realize that they needed to leave and remembered a place where the food was plentiful so the next day they packed up and headed out. The next few days proved to be the most difficult for the old women. Nights were freezing, but they survived in their snow tunnels. Mornings came with aching bones and unbearable pain as they moved and pushed their old bodies to their limits. The students' jobs for chapter three are listed in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4 Chapter 3 Students and Jobs

Student	Job
KM: Kim	Ideas
KF: Karen	Luminary
TE: Tom	Connector
AA: Aaron	Summarizer
MD: Martha	Word Finder
GS: George	Director

In the excerpt below, Karen speaks to the women's long memory and how this knowledge saved them and ultimately the People. Again, this chapter refers back to the women going back to a place long forgotten by most of their clan but remembered by them as a place where food is plentiful.

Excerpt 4.4. Karen zooms in on thematic quotes

Text from book (Wallis, 1993, p. 34)	Dialogue	Images from Notes	Comments
<p>about where to go. Suddenly Ch'idzigyaak burst out, "I know of a place!"</p> <p>"Where?" Sa' asked in an excited voice.</p> <p>"Do you remember the place where we fished long ago? The creek where the fish were so abundant that we had to build many caches to dry them?" The younger woman searched her memory for a moment, and vaguely the place came to mind. "Yes, I do remember. But why did we not ever return?" she asked. Ch'idzigyaak shrugged. She did not know either.</p> <p>"Maybe The People forgot that place</p>	<p>Karen: my job is the luminary, do you remember the place where we fished long ago, maybe the people forgot that the place it existed</p>	<p>[Do you remember the place where we fished long ago?" Maybe the people forgot that place existed."]</p> 	<p>Generated from student job and relates story as a place where they prospered</p> <p>Karen's illustration shows women fishing.</p>

If we view the example above, Karen's job in Chapter 3 is the luminary. The students' conversation just went back to the beginning which showed the cyclical nature of their conversations. The students' jobs, the way they interpreted the book, led this conversation back to the purpose of the long trek that was both exhausting for the old women but necessary in the events of the story. Chapter 3, recalling old skills, was an important step in the old women surviving. The image shows the women in a desolate place, trying to survive by ice fishing in the cold winter. Ice fishing, in rural areas, is an outing that is exciting, fun, and familiar to the students. It is time consuming to chip through the ice to get to the water below. People sit on an object like a five-gallon bucket which is placed upside down, drop their lines in the hole created by chipping or an auger, and patiently wait and jig. Karen's picture shows none of that. They are desperately trying to survive the elements during a harsh winter (see Appendix H).

This chapter has the women planning to travel and what they had to accomplish before the long trek. The students reflected this process in their jobs and dialogue. The women had to prepare for this long trek. The beginning of this thread shows George introducing the main idea of going to the lake and the making of snow shoes. Kim summed it up best when she said “they’re going to a lake where they went fishing, where they built a lot of caches to dry the fish.” The students seemed to forget that they had to cross a frozen lake to get to the creek where the fish were abundant. So again the threads of conversations follow their jobs here starting with George, then going to Tom and his thread about making the snow shoes. This was followed by a discussion on whether ice fishing is possible.

The dialogue below shows George asking a question that was not on his notes but was generated as part of the dialogue. This is a great example of the dialogue happening naturally as students discuss events in the story. This also shows how the students incorporated their own funds of knowledge into the process. They had to refer back to how they learned about survival, about clothing production, and about the tools needed to survive.

George: what did they do when they're younger?

Teacher: so, what are some things you think they did when they're younger?

Karen: I think they would watch their parents and learned how they did it, so they could do it

Martha: I think they learned how to make snow shoes because in the winter time, the snow could get pretty high and hard to walk through

Aaron: I think they had to learn that, how to cook, to make parkas, to make snow gear for the winter, and make sure there's, uh, you can boil the food in a pot

Kim: I think they learned to make like...oh, ah

Tom: I think they learned to make the tools and learned how to hunt them

Martha: I think they also learned to gather **birch wood** because you need birch wood to make the snowshoes and baskets umm., the words I thought were interesting was direction, struggle, ventured, birch wood, materials, accomplished, and ab, abundant

In the 11 Alaskan Native Groups, there are values and ways of knowing and doing that overlap. One way of learning is through observation and listening before attempting on your own. This is dependent on age and difficulty of the task on hand. That is why George's question of what they did when they were younger generated discussion. Karen said what I was hoping that one of the students would say, that you watched your parents and learned how they did it, before doing the task yourself. This of course is not specific to Natives only, but is a theme that comes up often.

Reflection on "things begin to fall in place."

I found it interesting that the students brought up specific survival skills from the text: making snowshoes, how to cook, making parkas, and making tools to hunt. This thread connected the women's actions in the story, skills needed to survive, and the funds of knowledge needed to survive. This knowledge is learned, practiced until becoming second nature, and then passed on. This thread also ties into the title of the chapter, "recalling old skills". The background knowledge or funds of knowledge is both necessary for the women to survive and is part of how knowledge is passed down from generation to generation.

The group comes together.

Chapter 4 "A painful journey" had a few threads of conversation that spoke to Sa's past that mirrors events in chapter one. This chapter shows how difficult the journey is for the two old women, and how they push their bodies beyond capability. They go to bed exhausted, cold, and hungry. They wake up in extreme pain with aching joints and bodies in their snow tunnels.

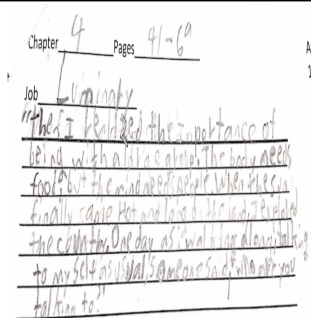
They need to walk the entire way there while pulling all their supplies in their folded up skin tent which is tied around their waist. Table 4.5 shows student jobs during the chapter four discussion.

Table 4.5 Chapter 4 Students and Jobs

Student	Job
KM: Kim	Luminary
KF: Karen	Ideas
TE: Tom	Summarizer
AA: Aaron	Word Finder
MD: Martha	Director
GS: George	Connector

The students began their conversations with the travelling to the camp, how long it took as far as time and distance, how they needed to stay warm, and the catching of a grouse. This led to a very interesting exchange (Excerpt 4.5, and see Appendix I).

Excerpt 4.5 The past repeats itself

Text from book p.65	Dialogue	Images from notes	Comments
with a large group. The body needs food, but the mind needs people. When the sun finally came hot and long on the land, I explored the country. One day as I was walking along, talking to myself as usual, someone said, 'Who are you talking to?' For a moment I thought I was hearing things. I stopped in my tracks and turned slowly to find a big, strong-looking man with his arms crossed, smiling at me in a bold manner. Many feelings ran through me at that moment. I was surprised, embarrassed, and angry all at once.	<p>Teacher: OK, can we talk about that first part, say that first part again</p> <p>Kim: ah, then I realized the importance of being with a large group, the body needs food but the mind needs people</p> <p>Teacher: The body needs food but the mind needs people,</p>	 <p>[Luminary “Then I realized the importance of being with a large group. the body needs food, but the mind needs people. When the sun finally came hot and long on</p>	<p>Kim remembered that Sa’ was kicked out of the tribe before speaking out against leaving an elder behind</p>

	<p>what does that mean to you?</p> <p>Martha: ah, um</p> <p>Tom: it means they're hungry and they're lonely and they're used to talking to a lot of people</p>	<p>the land, I explored the country. One day as I was walking along, talking to myself as usual, someone said, "who are you talking to?"</p>	<p>Tom focuses more on immediate physical needs</p>
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There is an interesting parallel in this story with Sa' being exiled again but as an elder who was considered a burden. In this exchange, Sa's is relating her past to the events that are happening now. This also relates to the importance of being with the band, that a group is safer than being alone, that family and tribe are necessary for safety, for community, and for interdependence. When she was a young girl going into adulthood, she stood up for an elder member of the tribe that was being left behind to perish. In doing so, she sealed her own fate and was left behind with the old women. She had to not only keep herself alive, but she had to care of the old blind women who perished. She said that she hunted anything and everything to survive, even foods that are not hunted to eat. Sa' was then left alone with only her thoughts and voice to keep her company. This is also the part where she met her husband who was also alone.

Reflection on being with a group.

One interesting note is as we progress in chapters, the students are taking on the leadership of the conversations. In Chapter 4, I still held the Tascam recorder and held it in front of students as they talked. I still sat in the center of the kidney table which typically is my spot. In later chapters, the student director started to sit in the center of the kidney table and passed the Tascam recorder to the student who wanted to talk or was chosen to speak next. This

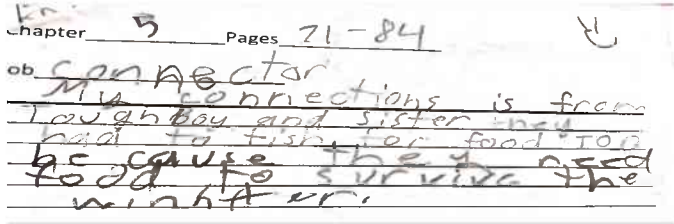
changed the dynamics of who was in control. While my role was still facilitator, keeping the conversation going, and rerouting as needed, and prompting/eliciting for detail, the director now began holding the Tascam. The Tascam was essentially used as a “talking stick.” My 4th graders are familiar with Talking Circles as we use them for social emotional learning lessons and conversations where we need to discuss specific incidences of behavior, and as a learning tool in listening to others speak until your turn.

Making connections.

In using their background knowledge or funds of knowledge, the students utilized what they learned from their families, their elders, and also from other classroom texts. One such connection was to an earlier text that we read starting in October. The fictional book *Toughboy and Sister* by Kirkpatrick Hill is a story about two Athabascan siblings who are left alone in their family fish camp after the death of their father. Earlier in the story, their mother died as a result of childbirth along with the sibling baby. This story deals with similar themes to those in *Two Old Women* (Wallis, 1993): the will to survive, using your funds of knowledge, and the necessity of family. Excerpt 4.6 (from multiple discussions) shows how the students referred back to this earlier text as they read similar events in the story about the two old women.

Excerpt 4.6 Text-to-text connections

<p>Ch. 3 comment Kim in notes</p>	<p>Connections: The book were reading is like tough boy and sister. There dad leaves them. Also in Two old women there band leaves them.</p> <hr/> <p>[The book were reading is like toughboy and sister. There dad leaves them. Also in Two old women there band leaves them.]</p>	<p>Video 9:32</p>
<p>Ch. 5, 51-55</p>	<p>0:09:19.0</p>	

Job	Marth: I'm the connector and my connections is from Toughboy and Sister . They had to go to fish for food to because they need food to survive the winter	Kim moving around
Q&A	Teacher: I know that from Toughboy and Sister that they were waiting for salmon to arrive then they knew, you know, how much time had passed.	Aaron yawning
Answer w/detail	Teacher: Who remembers the section about salmon from the story <i>Two Old Women</i> ? Martha: they had to move closer because it was a long walk from camp to the stream and and because they had to cut it and dry it, it was a lot of work going back and forth back and forth  <p>Job: <u>connector</u> My connections is from <u>Toughboy and Sister</u> they had to fish for food too because they need food to survive the winter.</p>	
Ch. 6, 55-56	[My connection is from Toughboy and Sister they had to fish for food too because they need food to survive the winter.] George: um, my job is connector because the story is like Toughboy and Sister , they don't give up whatever they do Teacher: does anyone else have connections to the story because relating it to Toughboy and Sister is a great idea... [interruption from office]	

The students brought up excerpts from their prior reading of Kirkpatrick Hill's book *Toughboy and Sister*. This story of these two children, around 8 and 11 years old, surviving alone in a fish camp for the summer, brought up comparisons to themes as they discussed *Two Old Women* (Wallis, 1993). Kim's initial comment speaks to the betrayal that the characters feel, the loss of family and community, and the necessity to survive both mentally and physically. Both of these stories had themes of survival, resiliency, using survival skills, and the necessity of being with someone else to help you along the way.

Martha's comment also continues the theme of hunger and necessity of always looking for food. Many Indigenous Alaskan people fish all year long: whitefish, pike, grayling, lamprey, blackfish, burbot, halibut, and other varieties that are more regional. However, during the summer time, salmon is key. Martha recalls the season when the women know that salmon is running so they needed to move closer to the source. Cutting salmon is time consuming, dependent on the weather for drying times, and in the case of the old women, they had to also deal with bears. The connection to *Toughboy and Sister* (Hill, 1999) is also part of their funds of knowledge, their connections from text to text, and also their own experiences with fishing.

George also relates to the theme of resiliency and survival. *Toughboy and Sister* (Hill, 1999) knew they had been at fish camp for a while when they realized the salmon were running. They also had trouble with bears and had to depend on their burgeoning survival skills to ensure they had food. Despite their elderly status, the two old women had the survival skills which are both cultural and traditional, based on seasons, and based on the strength of the salmon runs.

Reflection on students' text-to-text connections.

It is important for me to refer back to what the students read and worked on prior to the reading of *Two Old Women* (Wallis, 1993). The fourth grade class read a variety of traditional narratives as well as Athabascan fictional literature such as *Toughboy and Sister* (Hill, 1999) and the follow up book *Winter Camp*. Both books are written by Kirkpatrick Hill, a teacher who taught in rural Alaska and Fairbanks. She lived in the villages and was immersed in the culture of the Athabascan people. I tell the students that writers use their background knowledge in writing their fictional stories which lends credibility to the characters, setting, and events of the story. As the students read the story, I was pleased that they were able to use this prior story as a frame of reference to the events of the old women.

Student jobs allow for discussion.

Later in the book, the women are found by the People. The chief sent Dagoo and three men to find the women. The chief's guilt was eating away at him, and he had to find out what happened to the women. Dagoo and the trackers found the women in their camp. The men were in bad shape, cold and hungry. Dagoo called out, and the women responded. As they got closer to their camp, the women had long spears as weapons in their hands. Dagoo was impressed at the warrior old women. They were amazed at the vitality of the women and the fact that they thrived alone while the rest of the People continued to suffer. The women fed the men dried fish and rabbit broth. The men vowed to protect the women from the rest of the People and chief. The women ended up giving them food for the trek back. In the next excerpt, the students discuss the old women's feelings during this process.

Aaron: want to talk about any of the luminary?

Karen: **we we must be brave and face them**

Aaron: sooo...so what do you think that means?

Karen: I think, I think it means to **be brave for anything that they do to them**

Martha: I think it means to be brave and **don't be afraid** of what will happen

George: what do you think...

Karen: what does we must be brave and face them

George: I think that means you, you

Aaron: (whispers) you want me to do it? **I think it means you should you have to be brave so you can make sure if they ban you again, you'll just do the exact same that you do**

Kin: I think it meanssss, **to face our fears** and...

Teacher: so did they face their fears?

student whispers

Martha: yes, they did face their fears because they, they thought they won't survive the winter before

Karen: yes because they they didn't think they'd, they didn't think they would be there where they are right now

Kim: yes because in another in another chapter, Sa' or Ch'idzigyaak said... I never thought I would do that again

This section was interesting to me in that it showed how the students constructed meaning based on Karen reading a quote. The luminary stated that “we must be brave and face them.” The old women survived their ordeal and have been found by Dagoo and the men who tracked with him. The chief sent them to look for the women after determining that was the correct thing to do. The band suffered greatly after the women left. Children died, food was still scarce, and people lost hope. My initial feeling was the chief felt that these actions were interrelated to the abandoning of the elders. The trackers traced the smell of camp smoke back to the women. The women were fearful that the men were there to dispatch them, and this thread showcases the students’ conversation about how the women should react. This also demonstrates that the children know the women are strong and brave. This theme is what kept the women alive during the harsh winter. The women learned that they are experts in survival, that they had the expertise to survive and thrive when the band abandoned them. They also had to learn to trust again after being so bitterly betrayed by the very people they loved.

Reflection on student jobs and discussion.

Student jobs are proving to be the key to major discussion points in the student meetings. They focus on key events of the story and allow students to voice their findings. I like the job of the luminary in this section and the fact that she was able to pinpoint a crucial quote from the chapter. These are also proving to be good “life” lessons for the students. As teachers and

parents alike, we ask students to make good choices, not easy choices. These require students to look outward and make decisions based on facts and not only on emotions.

Understanding and lessons learned.

In the concluding chapter, the two old women are reunited with the People. The women know that they can trust Dagoo and the trackers since they gave the women their oath of protection. However, this protection is not reflected in the rest of the People. If the Chief can abandon elders, what is to stop him from taking what they hunted and gathered? The elders told Dagoo that they must only stay at the old camp, and only Dagoo will be allowed into the women's camp. The women worked diligently to gather and prepare food for their survival. They prepared more food than they needed, perhaps knowing that they could help the Tribe. The women's dried fish nourished the famished tribe. The women not only fed the People but clothed them well because they spent their long winter making and producing extra clothes. This luck helped the People who rejoiced when they caught a moose. The Chief and Dagoo continued to visit the women but let them know that others wanted to visit as well. The women granted that wish and soon had visitors who brought them gifts in return. Forgiveness came, but Ch'idzigyaak yearned for her family. The day her grandson came was emotional. She loved that young man, and he continued to bring joy and happiness with his visits. His mother was a different story. Ozii Nelii was filled with guilt and self-loathing. Ch'idzigyaak told Shru Zhuu to tell his mother that she wanted to see her. That meeting was also emotional and all was forgiven. The dynamics changed. Love forgave all wounds. The People never forgot Sa' and Ch'idzigyaak. The women earned their leadership positions and places of honor in the tribe. This following dialogue shows the students discussing this reunion.

Martha: I also want to talk about when the men, the day the men went back to the chief and told that the women had survived

George: they, they didn't want to talk to them

Karen: whispering um.

Tom: I don't think they didn't let anybody else in **probably because they needed time to think about letting them in or not**

Kim: I think they let the chief and four men in because they weren't asked to leave, ready to see other people

Aaron: ev, everybody was surprised that when they told that, when they told the story that the two old women were survived, **everybody was astonished and didn't think, know they were gonna survive the winter or not**

Tom: for **three years**

Karen: they didn't, they had doubts of surviving the winter

Teacher: but, um, didn't Dagoo also bring back the women's rules, what were those rules?

students: the rules the rules

Kim: **the rules were only the chief and the four men could go, nobody else could go until they wanted visitors**

Aaron: also um, the rules were never gonna, going to abandon the any people **behind especially old women**

Tom: then they finally thought about it after a bit and **they started letting them have visitors every day**

The last chapter was bittersweet in the beginning, but love overcame their feelings of betrayal and abandonment. When the women allowed Dagoo and the trackers into their tent, they realized that despite overwhelming odds, they were fed, clothed, had excess clothing and supplies in their caches, gathered and stored food, while the men looked ragged and starving. The women, despite their initial reserve, allowed the tribe to take the excess, and they camped close by. The students realized that the dynamics had dramatically changed, that the women now fed and clothed the band. The old women had to ensure their own safety and set up rules

that Dagoo brought back to the chief. The old women knew that their feelings had to change. Sa' changed her mind first. However, Ch'idzigyaak was slower to forgive, but that changed as children started to enter their camp. Forgiveness was what was needed and forgiveness is what she gave to her daughter and grandson. When they visited her, all was well and love overcame her negative emotions. The band never abandoned the elders again. The women lived out their lives as heroes, experts in survival, and as women to be revered.

Reflection on understanding and lessons learned.

This final chapter had the students feeling exalted that the women survived, sad that the People fared poorly with children dying, and sad again at the very end when the women died of old age. All throughout this process, students said “this book is amazing,” “the story is good,” and “this is exciting.” The students’ conversation above showed me that they had great comprehension of the major events of the story. They knew that the women trusted Dagoo and the trackers. They had to re-trust the Chief and the People again thus the “rules”. The students knew that the women were alone for a long time and needed the companionship of their friends and family, especially their family.

Post-Discussion Projects

After our literature club discussions, the students completed two projects. One project that we worked on was on themes, and the other was a Bloom Ball. Both of these projects are described below in more detail.

Theme project.

We discussed themes as they emerged in the story but not in a linear way. My goal for the project was to have the students choose six themes and find quotes that demonstrated them effectively. Before we began this, I brought up the movie *Big Hero 6* and used that as the

backdrop on the idea of theme. We brainstormed themes which was written on the board. The decision to have the students find quotes for this poster was easy. The job of luminary was one that students enjoyed and prompted dialogue and co-construction of answers in Chapters 1-8. Many of these themes were interdependent so the students were able to find quotes in a timely manner.

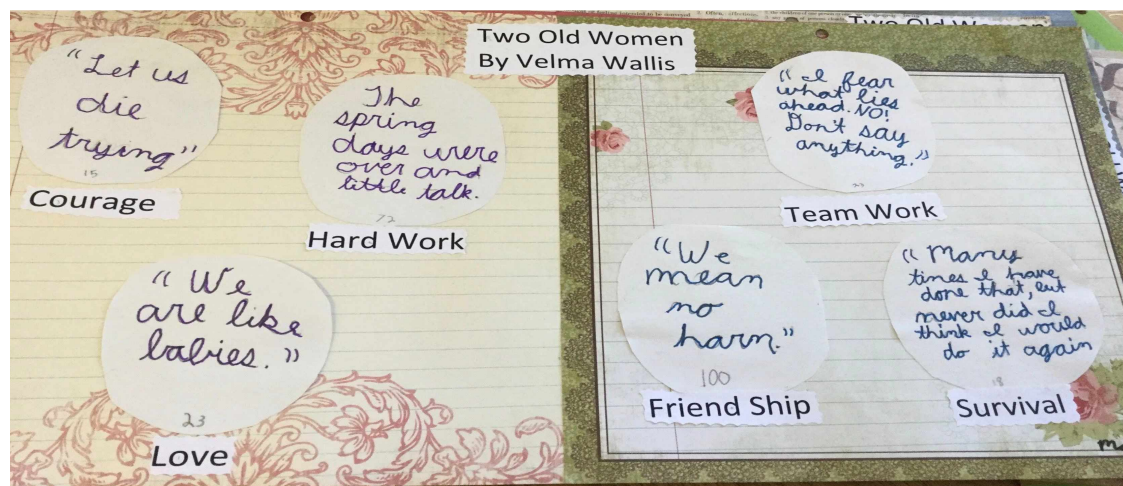


Figure 4.2 Martha's Themes

The above theme poster was from Martha. She chose courage, hard work, love, friendship, teamwork, and survival. "Let us die trying" was a quote that more than one student chose that could fit in a variety of categories. This was also part of their collaborative dialogue that led to an exchange right away in Chapter 1. This was also the title for Chapter 2. "The spring days were over and little talk" as a quote to represent them of hard work is telling. Exhaustion and pushing their bodies beyond limit was the norm in the beginning. The women walked in extreme cold, ate sparingly when they food was scarce, burrowed into a snow tunnel during the freezing cold nights, and woke up to do the same. "We are like babies" for love was an interesting choice. Babies need to be taken care of, babies require full time care, and are dependent on their family for survival. When the women realized that their weakness was

actually a strength, they began to change. Despite their frail tired bodies, they endured and thrived. They depended on each other, survived by these ties and closeness, and trusted and loved each other to the end. “We mean no harm” and “I fear what lies ahead. Say nothing” refers to when Dagoo and the men found the women. The women had to overcome their fears, fears of their supplies being taken from them forcefully, fears that the tribe would abandon them again, fears that they could never forgive the band for what they did. “Many times have I done that, but never did I think I would do that again” is the section of the story that engrossed the students. The section where Sa’ took the hatchet, used her skill and expertise, to aim slightly above the squirrel, throw with precision, and kill the squirrel. This was what started the women on survival. They took the squirrel, dressed the animal, and cooked the meat until a rich broth was made. They knew that they could not eat much, so they drank the broth slowly. This was the defining moment when they knew that they must fight to survive as they rationed and portioned that small squirrel into meals.

Reflection on themes.

Wow. Courage. Love. Hard Work. Teamwork. Friendship. Survival. These are what people need to be successful in life. It is important for our Indigenous students to realize that survival 100 years ago is similar to survival in today’s world, especially for family and community based tribes. It is amazing to me that these ten year olds took away so much from this story. As Native people, we need to look to the past because of how it guides our present, and informs how we face events in the future. It has been said from elders that we should not guess or predict the future but our foundation in language, culture, and identity shapes how we face adversity and celebration alike.

Bloom ball project.

For the students' final project, I had many internal debates on what to do. Should I attempt to have students create an iMovie? Should they make posters or a diorama? Should they work on different projects like a play? I wanted the project to be big, bold, and based on the events of the story so I decided on a Bloom Ball (see Appendix J). The students had yet to create a large diorama type project based on literary elements. As the students began to work, they needed to create a rough draft based on these sections: title, author, setting, characters, beginning, middle, end, three illustrations, and a book review. As they wrote, they needed to have their rough drafts peer edited. Then they were able to take the Bloom Ball pattern and create their sections of the dodecahedron. The students also had the choice for their illustrations based on how they felt about the importance of the events. I knew that I wanted the students to be creative yet grounded in the characters, setting, and plot of the story. This project took approximately two weeks to complete. Most of the class completed all 12 panels with a few notable exceptions. Aaron, George, Martha, and Karen completed their project. Kim did not complete all panels while Tom only completed three panels. Kim, according to parents, stated that she has Attention Deficit Disorder, and therefore has difficulty staying on task. Tom, on the other hand, is a very slow worker, and is often the last person to finish any project. See Appendix J for Aaron's Bloom Ball.

Reflection on Bloom ball project.

The students had familiarity with Athabascan stories. The students read shorter oral narratives based on animals or animals helping or hindering humans: Raven stories, Porcupine and Beaver, and Blind Man and the Loon. For a thematic unit, this novel was necessary, and this was the first traditional novel length story that the students read that was based on an oral

narrative. This narrative was fully based on the Gwich'in people, of past events that were treated as expository events, and on the necessity of family and clan on survival. Therefore, it was important to have the students write about the author, Velma Wallis as part of their unit. This final project allowed the students to look at the story from beginning to end, and allowed the students to choose what was important to them. While the beginning, middle, and end have similarities, the students chose events for their illustrations that spoke to them. This also continued the ideas they utilized from their notes as far as illustrations, their comments, concerns, and thoughts. For my TAR finale, this was a great ending to a process that was thought provoking, induced dialogue and co-construction of answers, included the students' funds of knowledge and background in Indigenous epistemology, and allowed for many interactions between myself and my fourth-grade class.

Conclusion

As teachers, we are familiar and comfortable with questions and answers about text in either written or verbal formats. We give our students written quizzes to see if they understand the text related questions. However, having collaborative discussions to gauge comprehension of the text take time and practice. Throughout this TAR process, I discovered that the students' jobs and role sheets engage students and assist in preparation for collaborative discussions of the text. I also learned that the text allowed students to access their funds of knowledge.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

With my teacher action research, I focused on what meanings students make during collaborative discussions of culturally relevant literature, and what the role of the teacher is during these collaborative discussions. This project brought me full circle to practices that I worked on with students as a beginning teacher in 1999. As an elementary teacher, I like working with thematic units. In treating this novel as a thematic unit, I was able to incorporate not only reading, writing, listening, and speaking, but thematic projects as well. This unit reinforced my beliefs that reading is both personal, social, and that teacher modeling and input is necessary as part of the interactions that happen with literature clubs. I learned that my students were engaged in the text, and came prepared to discuss based on their notes. The students were able to get to the main themes of the story using their funds of knowledge through collaborative discussions. These interactions assisted with the flow of dialogue (that the students spoke freely about the events of the story based on their notes), which led into collaborative discussions. The communication and literacy skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking are necessary in comprehension and fluency. The usage of cultural literature was also crucial in the engagement of the students, which enabled them to utilize their funds of knowledge as Alaska Native students. During this eight-week project, I realized why literature clubs are a worthwhile endeavor in literacy. Students were engaged in collaborative discussions which took preparation based on their jobs and role sheets. Students accessed their funds of knowledge and made connections to their family and community. This process, however, took time, effort, and patience on all our parts.

Collaborative Discussions Take Time

As stated before, collaborative discussion is meaning making dialogue. My fourth grade students had heard the word dialogue before, meaning words in quotes in the text, words that characters say in plays, or people talking to each other in cartoons using bubbles. They know that working together in a group is necessary in “group work.” For example, we practiced speaking to each other before in answering questions as a whole group, working in small reading groups answering questions, and working together as partners in reviewing math work to explain how you got your answers. Based on this, my assumption was that they knew exactly what to do after they read the chapter, wrote their notes, and met as a group to discuss their findings. Imagine my shock and dismay when I heard “crickets” during the discussion of Chapter 1. My fourth graders always talk. They talk to each other incessantly, visit, joke around, and can get really animated when left to their own devices. However, when I ask a question that students cannot answer right, and I get back no response, that is what I and many others refer to as “hearing crickets.” This is typically done humorously and students know what that slang term means. Again, I realized the necessity of checking assumptions to ensure that students are aware of what they are supposed to do versus what they think they are supposed to do. The necessity of modeling comes through again and again. In our graduate courses, we heard the terms “I do, we do, you do” as mantra of modeling what we want our students to achieve.

This process was not done easily though and time was needed to build confidence. After reviewing the first literature club session with Group 1, my initial thought was that this was a slow-moving process. The students showed hesitancy in speaking, so my time was spent engaging students by prompting questions while eliciting details. It did not occur to me until after Martha said “I forgot the camera was there” that this was a new situation for many students

that was confirmed when Aaron asked “how do you teach?,” referring to the difficulties of being the discussion director. This gave me insight into how this process was working as opposed to my initial dismay. This allowed me to see how interacting with the students, finding ways to elicit and prompt as well as allowing them to take control made sense. As a teacher and facilitator, I had to learn when to step in and when to stay back and let the process lead the students to where they needed to go.

I liked that our collaborative dialogues turned into Talking Circles where each student said their piece, listened, and waited until they could speak again. I use Talking Circles in my classroom when we need to have a whole group discussion where each student can contribute to the topic. Students sit in a circle, and I begin with the purpose of the circle. Students know that they need to listen, wait their turn, and then speak from their point of view. Up through the Chapter 4 discussions, I still held the Tascam recorder and held it in front of students as they talked. I still sat in the center of the kidney table, which typically is my spot. From Chapter 4 on, the dynamic shifted. The director then sat in the center of the kidney table and passed the Tascam recorder to the student who wanted to talk or was chosen to speak next. This changed the dynamics of who was in control. While my role was still facilitator, keeping the conversation going, and rerouting as needed, and prompting/eliciting for detail, the director was now holding the Tascam. There was little shouting over each other with interruptions. Students learned to listen, add to, and formulate new threads in their conversations. This is also reflected in Yup’ik meetings that I have attended. I have often heard that these meetings tend to be quieter, that people listen to others while waiting to say their piece. They respect what was said before and this respect is shown in their response to the group. This response is reflected in the students’ knowledge of Talking Circles where they wait their turn, listen fully, and share when needed.

This is reflective of Indigenous epistemology where people respect what others have to say, that they do not talk over others, and wait until it is their turn to speak.

Role Sheets Support Discussions

Originally, I debated on whether the students needed jobs or roles in our literature discussions. In classic literature circles, Harvey Daniels (2006) noted that role sheets “were for temporary use only, but I soon saw them becoming predominant in too many classrooms...cautions about the mechanical discussions that can stem from over-dependence on these roles” (p. 11). In retrospect, the students needed these job or role sheets. Not only did they discuss their roles based on what they wrote, but they also wrote questions, comments, connections, concerns, additional topics items, illustrations, predictions, and doodles. These additional topics gave them a variety of options. While that may have been too much writing, the notes ensured that students had accountability in their reading.

The notes also showed me that they understood what they were supposed to write about. The students who were the luminaries were able to find meaningful thematic quotes even if they were chapter headings. These quotes generated discussion that was deep for nine and ten year olds to have, and they were able to add on additional information as they went around. I was also impressed by their willingness to participate in the discussions. Out of the participants, Aaron, George, Martha, and Karen wrote their notes. Tom and Kim often struggled to write but that was common for them in other areas in school. George and Martha often struggled with spelling too in the writing process. Despite struggles in their jobs and note taking, this did not deter from their participation in the discussions. Aaron and Martha both had high levels of understanding and were able to comment on most discussions. As the story progressed, the

students were able to delve deeper into content and the lives of these two Gwich'in Athabascan women.

Cultural Literature Enables Access to Funds of Knowledge

The use of cultural literature, the book form of a traditional oral narrative, was necessary in this dynamic process for my Indigenous students. The Athabascan people depended on the land and seasons for food and materials. Every season was a busy time of year for everyone, and everyone had to pitch in to ensure that food, goods, and materials were had for the long winter. In viewing the child as a whole, we also need to be aware of their funds of knowledge while planning. We have to be aware of their history, their family, their language exposure, where they live, what schools they have been to, and especially their areas of strength. It is always easy to view areas where a child struggles the most whether it is academic, social, behavioral, or a combination of them all. Teachers need to encourage the use of this knowledge as a valid source of traditional knowledge, familial as well as community stories.

The students were able to draw from their funds of knowledge by sharing their own experiences hunting and gathering, or the experiences of their extended family members. The students were also able to connect to cultural lessons learned in school, and thus were able to draw parallels from the books they read at school about identity, personal strength, culture, necessity of family and community. This was not just about survival. They read together, collaborated together, and had the ability to utilize those skills in during collaborative discussions.

When I was teaching English at Ayaprun Elitnaurvik Yup'ik Immersion Charter School, my co-teacher used Yup'ik oral narratives during the Jr. High Speech Contest and placed them under expository speeches rather than narrative. In treating this book as expository prose,

students learned about this band of Gwich'in and the extraordinary events of Ch'idziyaak and Sa'. Velma Wallis stated "stories are gifts given by an elder to a younger person" (Wallis, 1993, p.xiii). While I am certainly no elder, this story was a gift for the students as well. In this time of language shift, language loss, we need to incorporate traditional stories in a Western way with a twist. Teachers tell stories every day about everyday events, special events, and these written narratives can be read out loud for students to hear and take to heart what they need at that moment. My students created theme posters and Bloom Ball dodecahedrons based on *Two Old Women* (Wallis, 1993). The students hear these stories and feel connections on many levels that can be expressed through talk, through art, and through projects. The students were also able to self-access their own progress. They were honest in what they accomplished, what they turned in, and to what extent they felt they did the work.

Interactions Take Time and Practice

Although I first assumed that the students' interactions within this literature club approach would happen quickly and automatically, I soon realized that it would take time to engage in these literature conversations as my students learned to participate and make connections. I also learned that my role as a facilitator was not simple, and that it took time for me to learn to interact in the literature clubs as well.

As the teacher facilitator, I had a necessary job to ensure that the conversations went smoothly and that students had the opportunity to contribute in the dialogue. In that capacity, I had to learn when to mediate as needed when the dialogue was very specific and ignored background information that was necessary for comprehension. For example, I will go back to the hatchet and squirrel. I backtracked the students to the story events that lead back to that specific event and then addressed that piece. It was important to me to not ignore what they said,

but to add on to the events so that the students saw that specific events had a bigger picture. I know that there were times that I dug myself into a hole trying to get the students to say what I thought they should especially with vocabulary. During those moments, I just told them what the meaning was. This was a learning process for myself as well. I mentioned before that I was mediating less and less as the students familiarized themselves with the dialogue and collaboration. There were moments where you could hear my frustration in trying to get them to a place I thought they should be. Upon reflection, I could have done more explaining and less examples or analogies on similar topics.

It was important and necessary for me to include the students' funds of knowledge about cultural events in the story especially when the women were hunting and gathering foodstuff. The students were able to tell about their family and their hunting traditions which included the experiences of their grandparents. Since this was my background, I was able to include my own experiences with bows and arrows, making my own fishing sticks, hunting with my father, seeing my own mother set snares, and how these were important rites in the community. This honoring of traditions showed the connections between the old women, their knowledge, and how this knowledge is continued today.

The students knew that cooperation was necessary in collaborative discussions. The students learned how to initiate their own discussion group by trial and error and with maneuvering the dialogue as needed on my part. This was not only question and answer time, but students went around and added on to what said before so my assumption is that they heard answers that were more complete than what they said on their own. Each student brought their own strengths and abilities as this progressed. Both Tom and George had experience hunting. Tom caught his first seal in 3rd grade. George caught his own moose in 3rd grade also. The

students had experience fishing and picking berries. These experiences are what gave them in-depth knowledge of the struggles the women had with finding food.

As the facilitator in this literature club process, the students saw that I was involved in the process from beginning to end. As a teacher at ANCCS and as a graduate student, I wanted a project that was both cultural, academic, and reflected the curriculum at the school. The students saw me sitting with them and their classmates from Chapter 1 to Chapter 8 and were reminded about the expectations that I had throughout the eight weeks.

Accountability was part of this process. Role sheets prepared students for collaborative discussions and highlighted the need for preparation and accountability. The students were able to capture their responses in writing and have material for group discussions. They were able to write down additional questions, comments, connections, as well as concerns. Their illustrations also enabled them to visualize what the text meant to them and recall important events of the story. Predictions also showed that they understood the events of the story and were able to think ahead in a thoughtful process to make connections in the text. Notetaking prepared the students for productive peer-led discussions.

Four Resources Engage Students in Meaning Making

The four resources model and previous literature club experiences also influenced the specific jobs that I had students do during literature discussions. Role sheets gives students material for discussions but also increases their ability to respond to text through writing. Additionally, the students' jobs promoted reading strategies of questioning, connecting, visualizing, inferring, and determining importance. The code breaker views the text as an investigator and looks at structural features of the text. Text participants determine meaning through their funds of knowledge, knowledge of text, and actively participate in critical dialogue.

Test users view text as reading, writing, listening and speaking. They use these skills in collaborative discussions. Text analysts read, analyze, co-construct answers while discussing key events.

This framework views literacy as social and cultural, addressing the sociological justice needs of students. Traditional oral narratives have a necessary place in today's world. This literature club allowed students to be critical thinkers as they read yet allowed them to see parallels in the events and themes of the two old women to events and themes that they recognize today. This text to text, text to self, as well as text to world relationship is necessary for students to be informed about their place in the community and larger world. As stated before, the Four Resources is a sociological model where student engagement is necessary where students can be code breakers, text participants, text users, and text analysts.

As 4th grade code breakers, the students knew that they had to do more than just decode and read the text. They had to realize what they did not know as far as vocabulary in relation to word choice. That is why we had vocabulary finder as a job, and while this did not detract from meaning making, it was necessary for important words from the story such as babiche. This allowed students to use word attack strategies. They were able to state their vocabulary words and choose which words they wanted to focus on in group discussions. They were able to also understand that the chapter headings assisted in figuring out the main ideas. For example, *Hunger and cold take their toll* was both a heading and a topic of discussion on what it meant. They also knew that this was a story with important characters, that the setting was crucial to the events of the story, and Kim said it best with "it has so many mysteries and it is very shocking." The unraveling of the shocking events is what made this story for my students.

The students as text participants made meaning from the text. They read the text, interacted with each other, and made connections to construct meaning during collaborative dialogue. They read the text, they wrote their notes, drew pictures, made predictions, and then spoke their truth during group discussions. This process allowed them to read, write, speak, listen, and collaborate.

The students as text users used this process in literature clubs with collaborative discussions. They were able to give their opinions, comments, concerns, as well as look at the purpose of the story as it relates to Athabascan culture and traditional oral narratives. Using a traditional story from an authentic point of view made this process relevant to the curriculum in 4th grade.

As text analysts, the students not only read the story, but they had to choose what to write in how it related to their job. They were able to determine what the text and story meant to them through collaborative discussions and co-construction of answers through negotiation of meaning. They continued to write in their notes and make those connections from Chapters 1-8. They read Velma Wallis's introduction and used that information for work throughout the process, so they deepened their knowledge about the author's message. They had an authentic view into the past of the Gwich'in Athabascan people of the interior.

All of these were needed in order to deepen the students' understanding of the text. The students were engaged in the process, used their skills and abilities throughout the reading, writing, listening, and speaking portions during literature clubs.

Overall Reflection and Implications

As I review this process with my 4th grade class from last year, I am looking ahead to what possibilities I have with my current students. Despite having new curriculum with a very

scripted process, our reading block lasts from 9 a.m. to noon. This new curriculum is based heavily on student conversation with language frames and explicit forms. We also have targeted reading intervention groups that last 30 minutes from 2:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Tuesday to Friday. It is during this time with small groups that I am most definitely using collaborative discussions. The students are in two groups of three boys and a pair of girls. They selected books that interested them, they choose what amount to read, then write comments, questions, quotes, illustrations, or self-organize their writing in what is manageable in that time frame. I am there, present, comment when needed, listen for comprehension strategies, ask strategic questions, and give ideas when they seem frustrated. The boys are taking off. The girls are less communicative, shy, but they both are engaged in the process.

As a Yup'ik and Koyukon, this identity gives me a place-based, theoretical outlook on the necessity of culture and education. Knowing who I am, where I come from, and how this encompasses my belief system is key. As an educator, my background also affects how I teach in my classroom: my worldview, my communication style, and how I view culture in my environment. This is the lens through which I see my world. As a Native Educator who has always worked with Native kids, I incorporate culture into my atmosphere and lessons plans. Language and literacy are reflective of the social and cultural communication methods and practices of the community. Part of this background is the ability to speak academically but include Yugtun (Yup'ik language) when appropriate since I teach reading, writing, math, science, social studies, and Athabascan Studies. All of these subjects include a healthy dose of reading. How you incorporate metacognitive strategies while interacting with the students, incorporating dialogue and cooperative discussion into reading, especially Literature, as part of the process of negotiating meaning becomes crucial.

The 4th Grade at Alaska Native Cultural Charter School (ANCCS) are required per the curriculum to learn about Athabascan culture. Part of this cultural enhancement is the reading and exploration of Athabascan Literature. Alaska State Standard 9 states that students need to: compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and plots in literature and integrate information from two texts on the same topic or related topics in order to write or speak about the subject knowingly (Anchorage School District, 2019; Alaska Department of Education & Early Development, n.d.).

This process showed the students how traditional literature is literature. As a young Native growing up, I was forging my cultural identity despite forced acculturation, assimilationist policies that still exist, intergenerational trauma, and ultimately using these lessons on life and loss into being strong, resilient, and Indigenous. I see myself reflected in the students. The students reading this story remember where they come from by connecting the past, to the present, and to the future.

Teaching at Alaska Native Cultural Charter School is rewarding and frustrating at the same time. I often ask my principal, are we a Title I school with a cultural component, or are we a cultural Native charter school with a Title 1 component? I now hear discussions about curriculum, what our students need to be successful culturally and educationally, and what we need to add or adapt to the existing model to be inclusive of oral traditions. As a veteran teacher, I find this to be rewarding, and I am modifying my time frames in my 3+ hour reading block for collaborative discussions using culturally relevant narratives. This inclusion of critical literacy embodies the concepts illustrated in the four resources model, brought forth by Luke and Freebody (1990) as a framework that addressed the sociocultural as well as social justice needs of students. If we view literacy as a means to educate the masses, then it is also a means of

suppression that ignores diversity, culturally responsive methodologies, multiculturalism, globalization, and sociopolitical ideology. Critical literacy then becomes a necessity in the theoretical approach to teaching about literacy to the whole population that embraces diversity in language, culture, and identity.

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Appendices

Appendix A IRB Approval Letter



Institutional Review Board

909 N Koyukuk Dr. Suite 212, P.O. Box 757270, Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-7270

October 15, 2018

Thank you for submitting the Continuing Review/Progress Report referenced below. The submission was handled by Expedited Review under the requirements of 45 CFR 46.110, which identifies the categories of research eligible for expedited review.

To: Wendy Martelle Principal Investigator

From: University of Alaska Fairbanks IRB Re: [1153020-3] Literature Circles in the 4th Grade

Title: Received:

Expedited Category:

Action: Effective Date: Expiration Date:

Literature Circles in the 4th Grade October 9, 2018

6 and 7

APPROVED October 15, 2018 November 13, 2019

This action is included on the November 7, 2018 IRB Agenda.

No changes may be made to this project without the prior review and approval of the IRB. This includes, but is not limited to, changes in research scope, research tools, consent documents, personnel, or record storage location.

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Appendix B Chapter 1 Group 1 Discussion 1

Chapter 1 Group 1 Discussion 1

Code/comments	Line	Transcription pause
Directional	1	T: Ok, who's the discussion director?
	2	Ok, you open up to your paper please....Ok, please start
	3	AA: the first one
Questioning job	4	T: uh huh
	5	AA: do I Say Chapter 1 stuff (whispers)
Directional	6	
Retelling	7	T: do you think is natural
Directional	8	AA: they should talk about, how how to survive, they should say, we are not going to die, think about living and trying
	9	T: so what do you think about that, go around and take turns please
Character Analysis	10	MD: umm
Paraphrasing	11	KF: they should be confident that they could, they could survive, so they could survive
	12	
Ideas – theme	13	TE: so chapter 1, we're not going to die, we're gonna try living
		T: OK
	14	MD: ah, idea is to survive and be hopeful , that maybe one of them will come back
Student led	15	pause
Job	16	T: k, go ahead
	17	

		GS: we think they're hoping [student: are you guys listening?
	18	
Restating fact		T: k, what is your job
		KF: the connector
	19	
Stating main ideas		0:02:06.0
		T: so what do you have for your connections?
	20	
Inference/job		KF: I think there is people who don't have enough food for everyone and it means they don't have, that their family has to go so they can live
Job	21	MD: I am the idea person and my idea is to survive and the elder be, and the boy took, took the bone, on the tree and one other elder, the other elder grabbed it from, the main idea to survive and betrayed, and they left the elders
Job	22	
Directions	23	GS: connector, the women could probably survive in the the wilder, wilderness
Questioning	24	KM: my job is the word finder, i found words like nomad, penetrating, and that that (?)
Answering	25	TE: my job is the luminary and I do important quotes like starr and the council and I have arrived at the decision
adding on	26	T: ok, what are some questions that you wrote down that you want to ask your teammates, go ahead Kierra
adding on		
	27	KM: do you think they're going to get the hatchet to kill an animal?
direction	28	
		AA: yes I think they should because there's nothing else for their, for.. protection
question	29	
		KF: yes, because they, they so you can have something to eat
restating question	30	
		MD: yes, I think they're gonna use it because it's survival, they're in the forest and they only have tents not houses
	31	
Fact check		

	32	T: do you have another question, what are your questions that you have?
Direction	33	GS: what part of Alaska is it or Canada?
direction	34	T: do you have an answer for that, do you know what part of Alaska they're at?
question	35	AA: no
restatement	36	MD: They're in the Gwich'in, in the Athabaskan area, the story is in the Gwich'in area
inference	37	T: very nice, are there any other questions?
direction	38	LOTS OF BACKGROUND NOISE FROM THE CLASS
adding on	39	T: Do you have questions, what's your questions, nice and loud
	40	0:05:44.7
	41	GS: how will they travel?
Adding but Clarifying	42	T: ok, his question is how will they travel, how do you think they're gonna travel? KM: maybe they could use...trees and maybe a boat
Direction	43	AA: maybe they could use horses, horses if they could find some
	44	T: what do you think about those answers?
	45	KF: it's good, maybe ya, because they use the materials that they have
	46	BACKGROUND: "QUIT TALKING" (OTHER GROUPS ARE TRYING TO POLICE EACH OTHER)
Facts from Book	47	MD: I don't think they won't be too useful because I think most of the elders can't walk
Facts from book	48	T: if we're looking at the story, itself, who can tell me what's happening in the story so far?
	49	0:06:47.2

	50	student: ah
		T: go ahead
Evidence from book	51	AA: what's the question again? T: what's happening, what's happening in chapter 1?
Reasoning	52	AA: the people came to a decision for, to leave the older women behind because they don't have much food so they gonna leave so to another camp
Reasoning	53	MD: what happened so far, the chief of the pack, I think, um, decides to leave the elders because it's winter time and it's hard to get food, and um., what. um, the old women whenever um, the younger man helped them, she would give him, um tanned skin
Reasoning	54	
Book evidence	55	TE: umm, they left them behind always gave to make their tents when
Directional	56	KF: the chief of the band said, told, made an announcement to the band and that, he had to leave the older, the two old women behind because they didn't have enough food and and
Book facts	57	
Directional	58	GS: they were surprised to leave the two old women because it might make them go slower
Reasoning	59	KM: no one was surprised because they thought it was for the best and [class noise still ongoing]
Directional	60	TE: they weren't surprised even Ch'idzigyaak's daughter were (too low)
Book evidence	61	MD: the grandson was surprised in the inside but didn't show it because um, he left the thing that was on his belt on the tree and so Ch'idzigyaak grabbed it
Book evidence	62	
Book evidence	63	T: oh, what did, what was left for them, who left them what?
Directional	64	AA: ax, an ax
	65	TE: and Ch'idzigyaak's daughter gave them a moose hide

	66	T: so why, um, what did that mean though in the greater scope of things for the grandson to give her that ax, what did that mean?
	67	AA: that mean that they cared about them , and they wanted them to survive
Vocabulary Questions	68	T: I remember them saying something that men and boys couldn't do, what was that?
	69	
Directional	70	MD: oh, it it was, they couldn't ask questions
Answering	71	T: uh huh
Teacher clarifying	72	MD: but um, the grandson asked questions but he learned that there's punishment when you asked questions
	73	0:10:10.3
	74	T: does anyone else have questions that's on their papers, that they want to ask, if they want to ask the group?
Job/ vocab.	75	
		GS: what does
		MD: I do
Directional		T: ok
	76	
Teaching giving answers	77	MD: what is a bundle of...
	78	T: babiche
		MD: babiche
Directional Vocab.	79	T: does anyone know what bundle of babiche is?
	80	
Teacher Giving answers		KF: a bundle of babiche is a lot of moose hide
	81	T: uh huh, it's moose hide, you know how most hides that they cure them, and they dry them and they cure them, so babiche is rawhide, that means when the they first catch the moose, and they skin it, they have to scrape the fur off, then they cut thin strips of the babiche, the rawhide to make like a rope like a very thin strong rope out of it.
	82	
	83	

Main idea		T: what other vocabulary words do you have Kierra?
		KM: aaaah....
Theme as Answer		T: can I see? Oh, nomads, who knows what a nomad is?
Reasoning	84	MD: I don't, not too sure
Teacher Clarifying	85	T: nomads are people who travel around, you know, remember a long time ago, the Gwich'in people did not
	86	have regular housing or settlements they moved from camp to camp so nomads are people who move
	87	around
	88	T: oh menacing
		KM: that's a lot of fun to say
Directional	89	T: menacing, do we know what menacing is, if someone comes at you and they're menacing, so that kind of means, um, they're coming at you and they're kind of, kind of, they're either angry looking or you're scared of them so that's menacing. She has something
Answering	90	on here too that's malnutrition. What does malnutrition mean? It's a very important un part of
Directional	91	chapter 1, malnutrition...what's happening right now to the tribe in this chapter? they're what?
Answering	92	AA: They're leaving the two old women
Restating Question	93	T: but why? KF: betraying
Anssering	94	T: they're betrayed but why are they leaving them?
Directional		MD: They're leaving them because they're putting
	95	them too slow and it, there's very little food
Answering	96	T: aha, so malnutrition means that they're starving, they're not getting enough food so they're body doesn't have enough food for energy and to survive what did
Reasoning	97	chapter 1 say, in the two old women's lifetime has that happened before? had they left elders behind?

	98	MD: yes
Reasoning	99	T: so you remember what the two old women had to say about that?
	100	pause [still background noise]
Statement	101	T: Amelio
		AA: they wanted to protest, that they shouldn't be leaving them behind because they can just make it work or something like that
Reasoning	102	
	103	T: who's remembers the name of chapter one, what was chapter 1 called?
Directional	104	
		KM: hunger and cold take their toll
	105	
Restatment	106	T: what does that mean, hunger and cold take their toll, what does that mean?
		MD: I think toll means it takes it's course
	107	
Thematic reasoning		T: ah, hunger and cold take it's toll so in what's, in the events of chapter 1, why is that a good title for chapter 1?
	108	
Thematic reasoning	109	GS: cause it means what they're gonna be doing to them
directional	110	T: ok
thematic reasoning	111	KF: it's a good title because they, because he left in the cold, left them with no food
directional	112	T: ok
thematic reasoning		MD: I think it's a good title because there's barely food and there's a lot other elders
	113	
		AA: I keep on forgetting stuff
directional	114	
		T: all right
answering		
	115	MD: and it's the wintertime and it's cold 0:14:35.9

directional	116	T: ok, just as a reminder, tell me what you learned so far from the book?
thematic reasoning	117	
	118	GS: I learned that...
thematic reasoning		KM: I learned that they had to leave the elderly behind so that they could move faster and have a special to be..
	119	
	120	AA: (whispers) that's what's what I was going to say, dangit
Thematic reasoning	121	
directional		MD: I learned that, sometimes you got to do stuff to survive and I learned it that in winter it can get bad sometime
characters	122	KF: I learned that you have to do stuff to survive like...like...to ask questions when you're not supposed to
	123	
		T: you don't have to raise your hand, just talk when you feel it's a good time to talk
directional	124	
		AA: ah, I think I learned that some people have to do the wrong thing to do the right thing
	125	
	126	T: anything else you want to add?
answer not quite	127	TE: I know they leave them behind to go faster but it's kind of disrespectful to elders
	128	
answer not quite		T: aha, can you add more to being disrespectful to elders?
directional		GS: disrespectful disrespectful by not by not caring about the elderlies and not uh, not um, taking care of them
predictions	129	
		T: how did the women felt as this was happening?
	130	
prediction		MD: I think they felt a little disappointed because her daughter didn't even stand up
	131	
Prediction Reasonable	132	AA: I think they felt left out because the people didn't react to the council what they had to say

		0:16:49.6
Prediction		
Reasonable	133	KM: I think they felt really sad and um
	134	
Prediction		MD: I think they felt a little defended because they
Reasonable		didn't even leave them a little food
	135	
Directional		T: um huh, so just as a reminder, who are the people
	136	we are talking about?
Prediction		KF: um, Ch'idzigyaak and Sa'
Reasonable		
	137	T: and who
Directional		KF: and Sa'
	138	
Good		T: why are they called the people, why do you think
Answer		they're called the people?
	139	
		AA: because they can learn, people can learn from
		them because they know what happened in the past and
Good answer	140	so they can get advice or something
	141	MD: I think they're called the people because they're
		like in the background of the story
Good answer	142	
		T: OK so, what do you think, what's a prediction you
	143	have?
Directional		
Jobs	144	TE: um, they'll save people because they don't want to
		say, a lot of..take care of it
	145	
		T: do you have any predictions, anything that's gonna
	146	happen?
		GS: I think what's going to happen that, they might get
	147	hungry and not survive
Connection		
To self		KM: I think um, they might live until summer
	148	
		MD: I think Ch'idzigyaak is gonna grab the bone and
	149	um, I think her daughter or her grandson is gonna to
Emotional		come back and help them survive
	150	
		KF: I think the band is going to come back and get the
Concern	151	two old women because they, if they are going to die,
		they will die together

Connection		T: do you think about those predictions, do you have anything that similar?
	152	
Directional Explanation Of format	153	AA: I think they're going to survive, I think they're not going to survive, only with their selves, I think someone gonna come back
	154	T: do we know old the women are?
	155	
		students: no!
	156	
		GS: I think they're 70
	157	
Questions		T: maybe that's something, how old do you think the women are?
Concerns		TE: one is 75 and one is 80
		T: very nice
Emotions		AA: one is in their 80s and one is in their 70s
	158	
Facts from Book *		T: what comments do you have on the book so far, do you have any comments or concerns?
	159	
Fact from Book	160	KM. I like, I like the book because... [background noise]
	161	MD: you have to (?)
Connection		KM: ? but sad
	162	
		AA: I remember when I was about 7, un, my mom and dad forgot me in a campsite and like 10 minutes after they were driving, they came back and I had to trust somebody that I knew and I went to the shop
	163	
	164	
		GS: I don't like the part where they don't really care about the elders, when they leave them behind
	165	
		MD: my concern is why did they leave and are they gonna survive
		KF: I like when they use more exciting words
		AA: my concern is I hope they will survive

TE: I had the same one

T: ok, so I kind of took over your job as discussion director, Amelio, but you guys kind of see, if you're the discussion director, do you kind of see how you have to keep the talk going, and all of you guys have to come to an understanding and know when to move on, OK, we're not just reading what you wrote down, you have to talk about it and try to come to a common understanding. So any final thoughts before I turn my recorder off?

MD: um, I hope they survive and I'm still wondering what is their name is English

GS: I hope they, somebody will come back for them

T: what if their language predates English

AA: **I hope they survive** until summer and make sure they find something where somewhere they can live or sleep at

TE: **Sa' means star though because um, she was born with the stars in the sky**

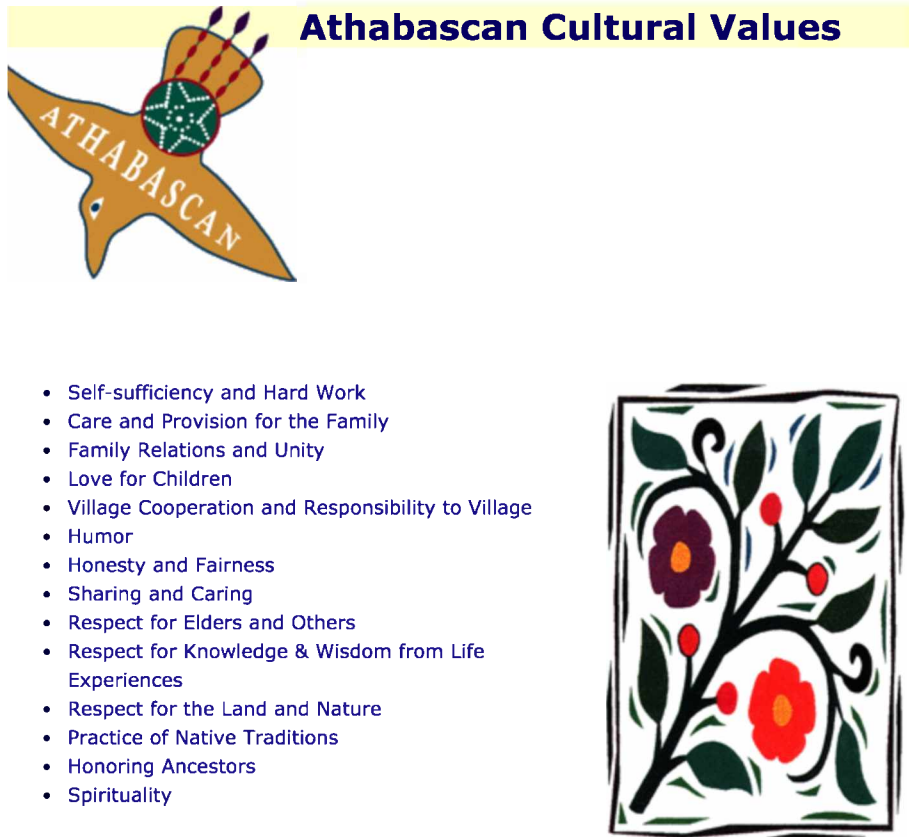
KM: **Ch'idzigyaak means like a little chickadee bird that her mom ?**

AA: I heard it in the wind (Smoke Signals reference)

T: good memory, Ok guys thank you so much

Appendix C Athabascan Cultural Values

ANKN Values Poster



Source: **DENAKKANAAGA ELDERS CONFERENCE**- 1985

Appendix D Kim's Ideas Role Sheet

Chapter 3 Pages 27-34

Job Idea

Ch'iziyank had a idea to go the place where there were fish. They had to take a lot of sacks to get the fish.

Questions:

1. Do you think they will catch different animals in different chapters?
2. Will Sam and Ch'iziyank be fish?
3. Do you think they will encounter a monster?

Comments:

This book is awesome because it has so many mysteries and it is very shocking.

Connections:

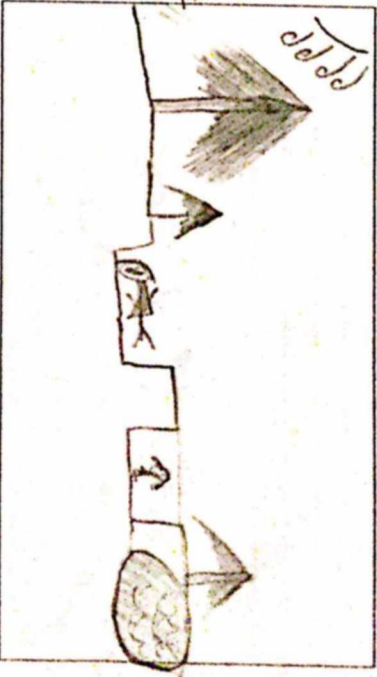
The book we reading is like tough boy and sister. The dad loves them. Also in two old women there bond leaves them.

Concerns:

Additional Discussions Topics:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.


Illustration



Predictions:

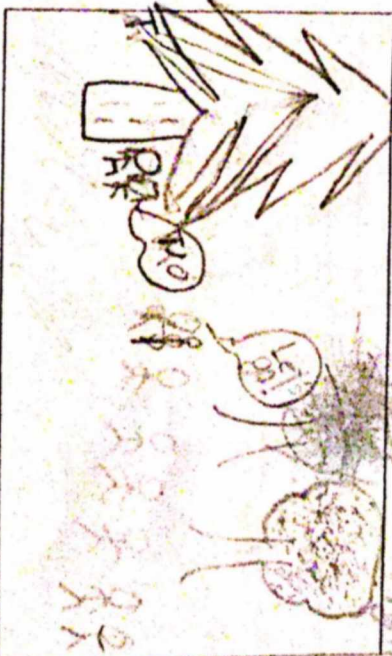
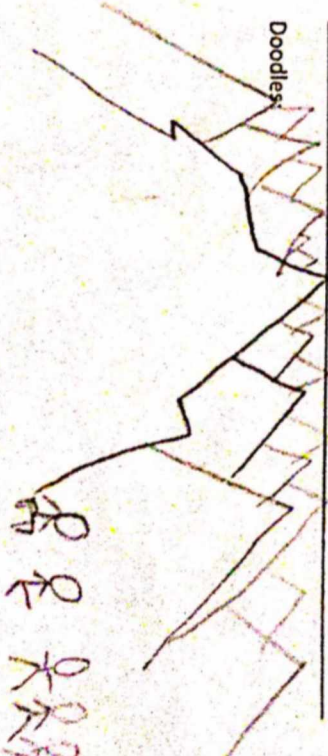
I think they will go to a camp site where they were before.

Doodles:



130

Appendix F Aaron's Director Role Sheet

Director	
<p>They should take about half to survive. They should not say were going to die + think about living and trying.</p>	<p>1. They talked about leaving now behind.</p> <p>2. They weren't surprised.</p> <p>3. They said they die.</p>
<p>Questions:</p> <p>1. Where does it take place</p> <p>2. How old are + there.</p> <p>3. Why did they leave to leave the old ones behind</p>	<p>Illustration</p> 
<p>Comments:</p> <p>I like it because it's interesting.</p>	<p>Predictions:</p> <p>I think there going to survive no there not. I think there going to put or something to eat.</p>
<p>Connections:</p> <p>I got left behind when we were camping.</p>	<p>Doodles</p> 
<p>Concerns:</p> <p>I hope they survive.</p>	

Appendix G Martha's Luminary Role Sheet

Chapter 2 Pages 15-26

Job Luminary

My job as Luminary I have to find quotes like it is times trying on like if many times I have done that I never did I think I would do it again.

Questions:

1. What is embers mean?
2. What is a nooses?
3. How many rabbits did they get?

Comments:

I think it is go that they found a way to get food and survival.

Connections:

I don't have any connections.

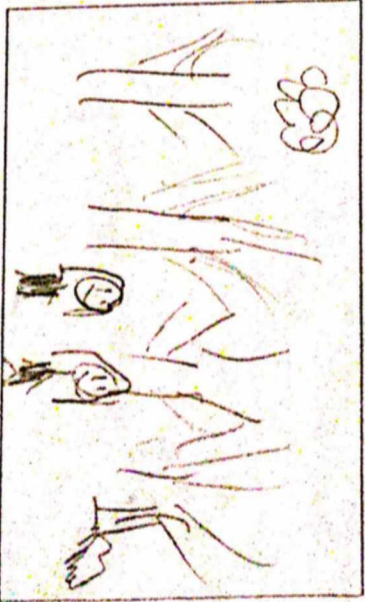
Concerns:

Rabbits are small and they are adults

Additional Discussions Topics:

1. Add how many rabbit did they catch?
- 2.
- 3.

Illustration



Predictions:

I think they are going to travel to the land and survival and live a long life.

Doodles:

Appendix H Karen's Role Sheet

Chapter 3 Pages 27-39

Job Luminary

"Do you remember the place where we fished long ago? Maybe the people thought that place existed!"

Questions:

1. What dose ventured mean?
2. What dose fatigue?
- 3.

Comments:

~~They~~ I like how they used fancy words.

concerns

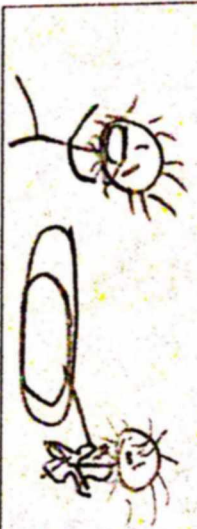
If they are going ~~to walk~~ farther and bite off more ~~concerns~~ then they can chew, connectors

OK

Additional Discussions Topics:

1. If they are going to go
- 2.
- 3.


Illustration



Predictions:

I think they will survive. And get where they need to go.

Doodles:



Chapter 4 Pages 41-60

Job Luminary
"the I learned the importance of
being with a large group. The body needs
food but the mind needs people. When the sea
finally came out and I had to lead I explained
the situation. One day as I was talking along talking
to my self as usual, someone said 'who are you
talking to'."

Questions:
 1. Will the women catch fish that live?
 2. Do you think the woman will find the band?
 3. Will the women catch more grouse?

Comments:
I can't believe the foolish women survived
the winter!

Connections:

Concerns:

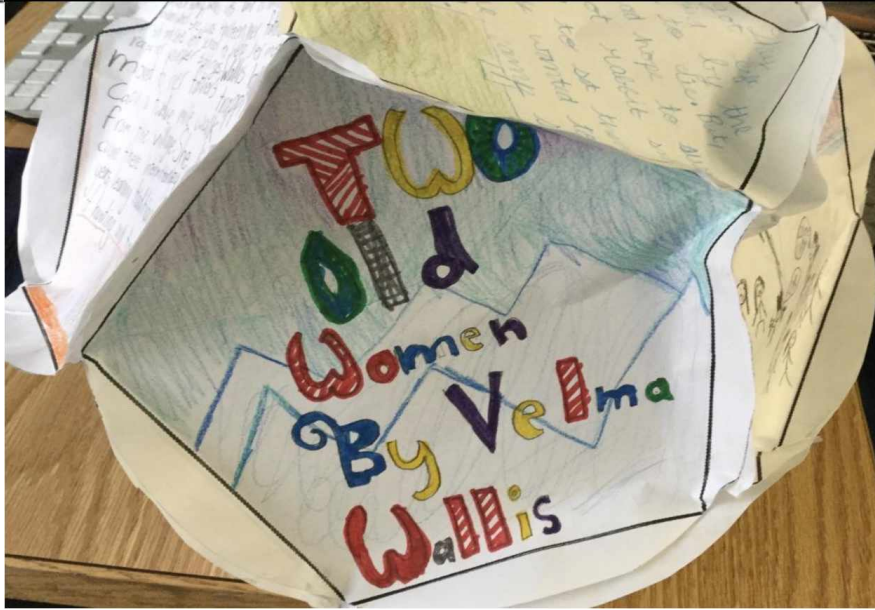
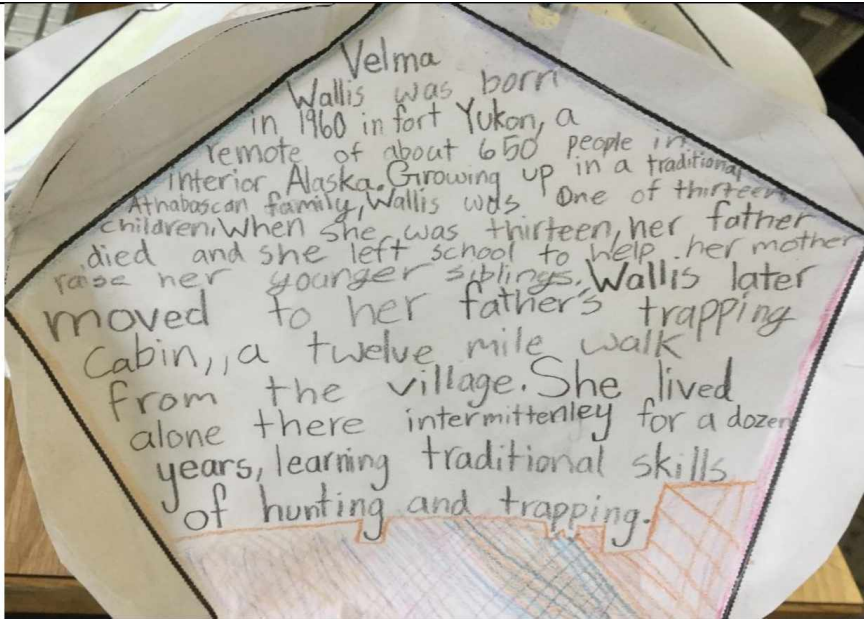
Additional Discussions Topics:
 1.
 2.
 3.

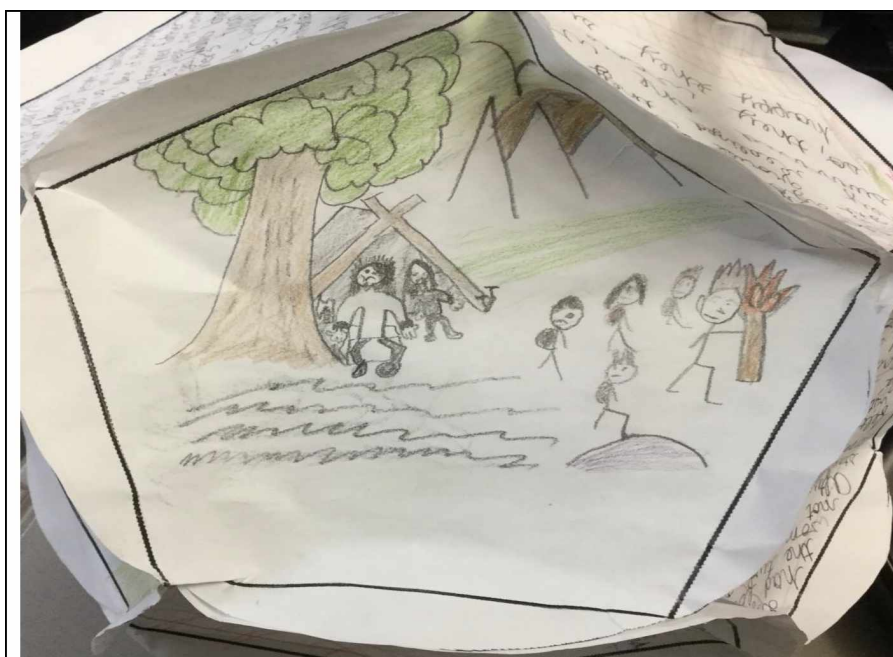
Illustration

Predictions:

Doodles:

Appendix J Aaron's Bloom Ball

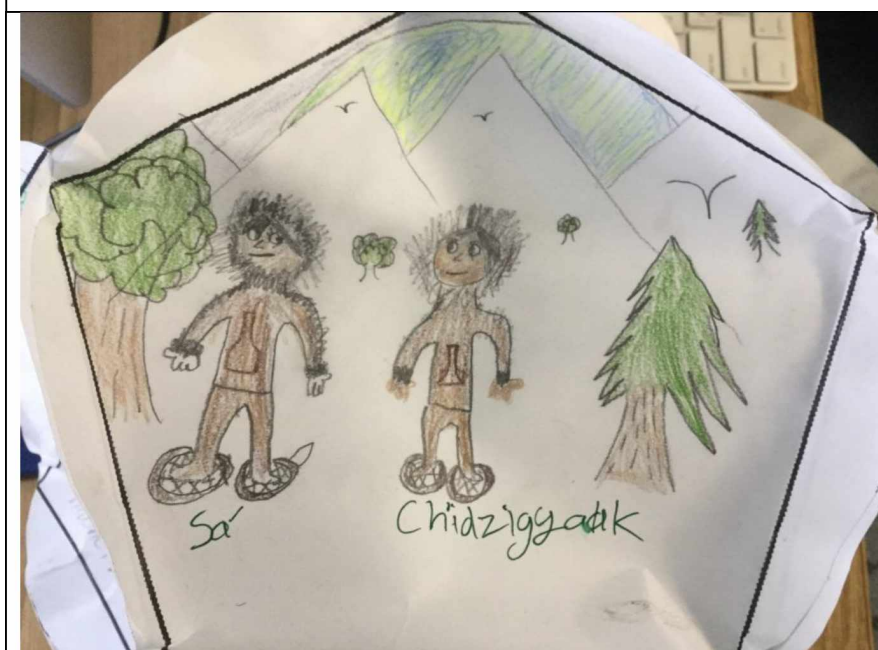
Project from Student AA, Aaron	Directions
	<p>Title</p> <p>Two Old Women By Velma Wallis</p>
	<p>Author</p> <p>Velma Wallis was born in 1960 in fort Yukon, a Remote of about 650 people in interior Alaska. Growing up in a traditional Athabaskan family, Wallis was one of thirteen children. When she was thirteen, her father died and she left school to help her mother raise her younger siblings. Wallis later moved to her father's trapping cabin, a twelve mile walk from the village. She lived alone there intermittenley for a dozen years, learning traditional skills of hunting and trapping.</p>



Setting

Birch, tent, mountains

The women are in their tent as Dagoo and the men look for them.



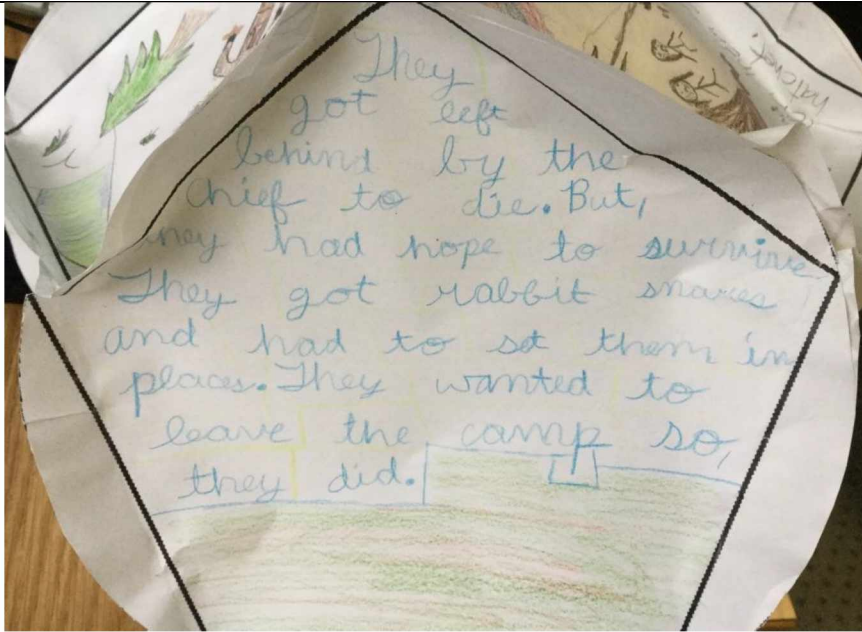
Characters

Sa'

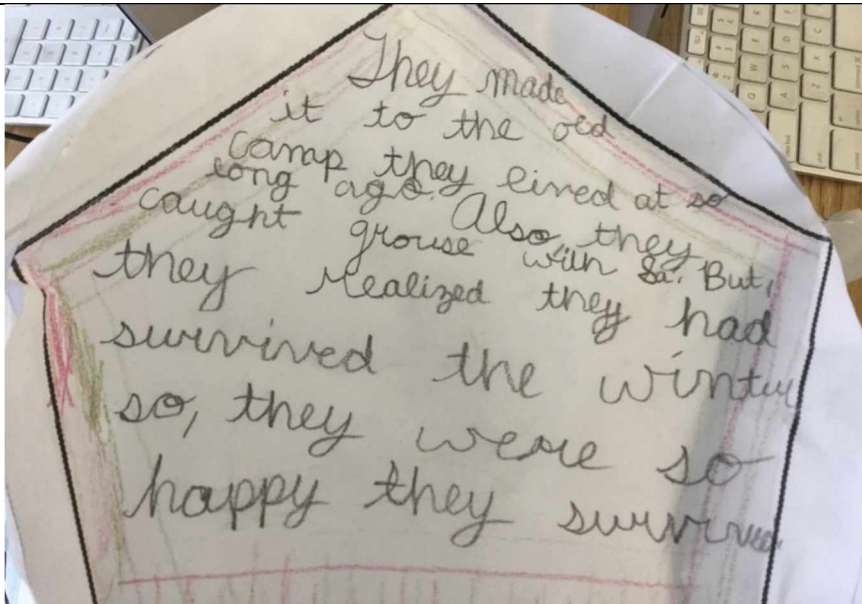
Ch'idzigiyaak

Beginning

They got left behind by the chief to die. But, they had hope to survive. They got rabbit snares and had

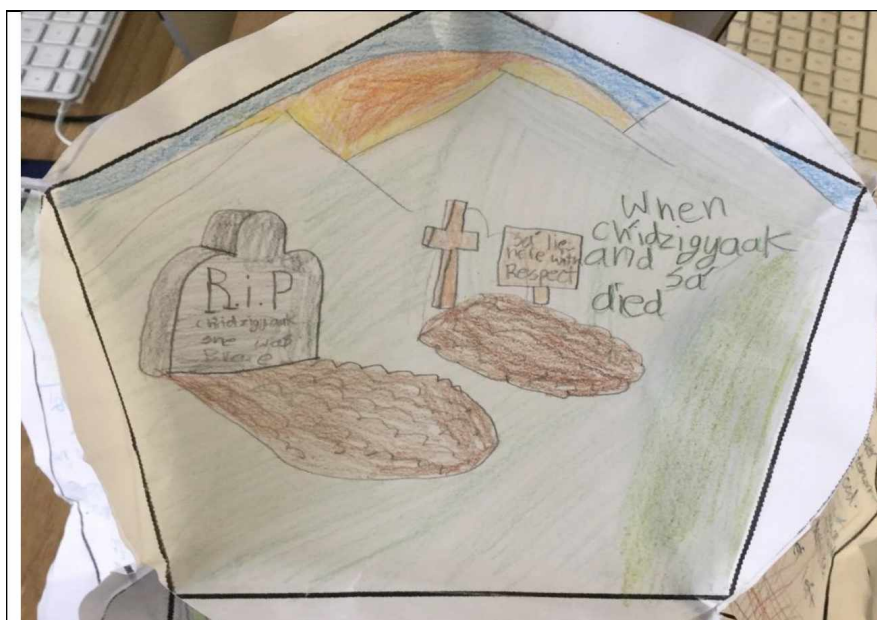


to set them in places.
They wanted to leave the camp so, they did.



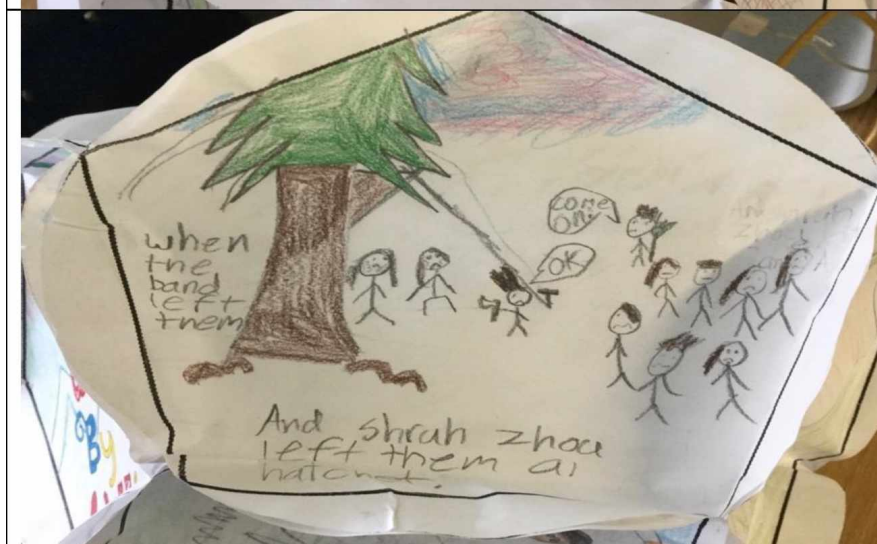
Middle

They made it to the old camp they lived at so long ago. Also they caught grouse with Sa'. But, they realized they had survived the winter so, they were so happy they survived.



End

When Ch'idzigyaak and Sa' died



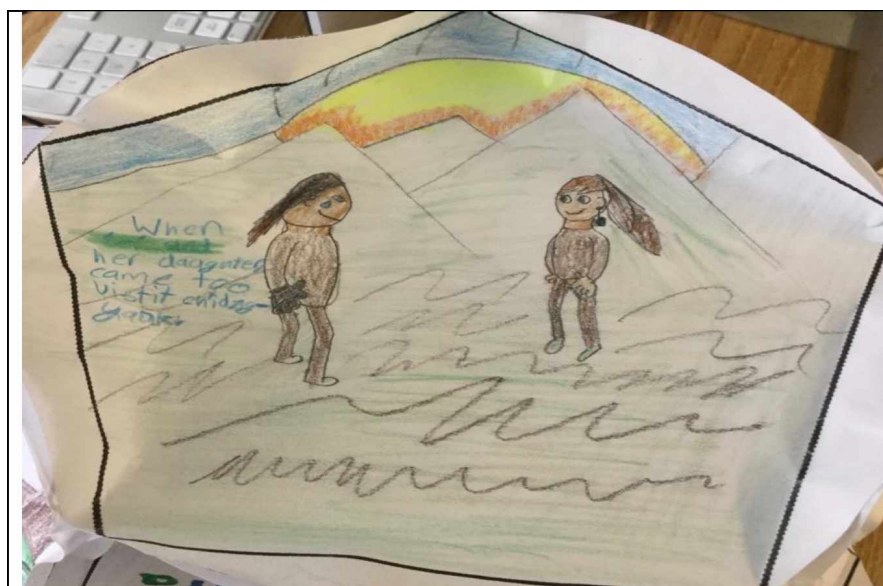
Illustration

When the band left them

"come on"

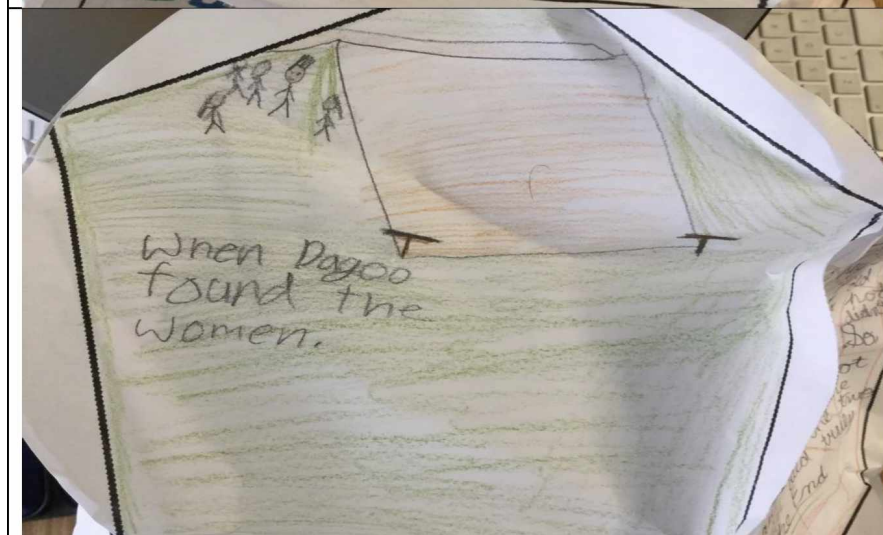
"ok"

And Shru Zhou left them a hatchet.



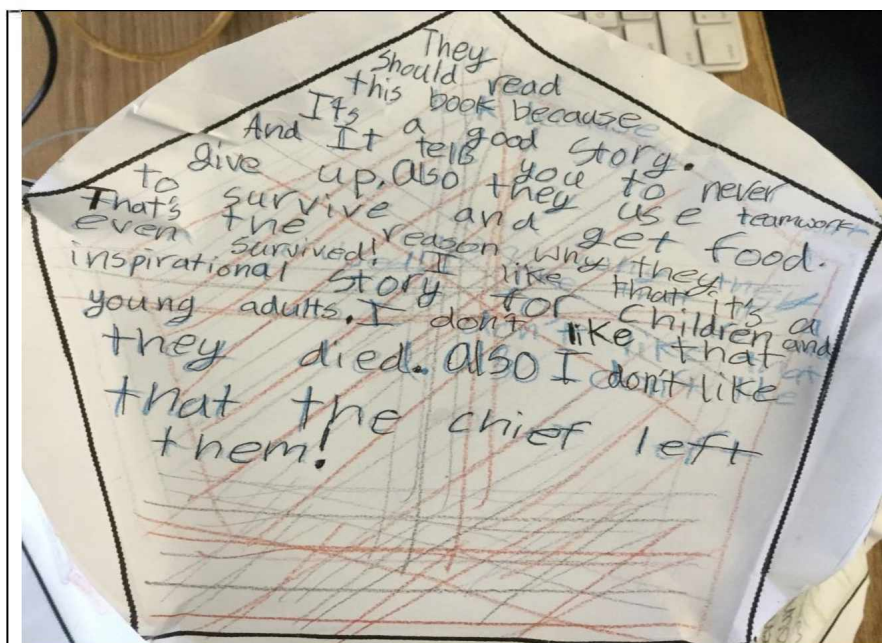
Illustration

When her daughter came to visit Chidzigyaak.



Illustration

When Dagoo found the women.



Book Review

They should read this book because It's a good story. And it tells you to never give up. Also they use teamwork to survive and get good. That's the reason why they even survived! I liked that it's an inspirational story for children and young adults. I don't like that they died. Also I don't like that the chief left them!